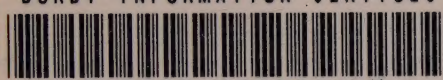




DORDT COLLEGE



3 6520 0073214 X

EVERYMAN'S LIBRARY

571

POETRY

Everyman, I will go with thee, and be thy guide,
In thy most need to go by thy side

WILLIAM LANGLAND, the probable author
of *Piers Plowman*, lived from c. 1332 to c. 1400.

DORDT COLLEGE

Sioux Center, Iowa

WILLIAM LANGLAND

THE BOOK CONCERNING
PIERS THE PLOWMAN

RENDERED INTO

MODERN ENGLISH BY

DONALD AND RACHEL ATTWATER

EDITED BY

RACHEL ATTWATER, M.A.



LONDON J. M. DENT & SONS LTD
NEW YORK E. P. DUTTON & CO. INC

All rights reserved
Made in Great Britain
at the
Aldine Press · Letchworth · Herts
for
J. M. DENT & SONS LTD
Aldine House · Bedford Street · London
First published in this edition 1907
New translation 1957
Last reprinted 1959

INTRODUCTION

THE POEM. The work called compendiously *The Book concerning Piers the Plowman* (*Liber de Petro Plowman*) is known in forty-seven manuscripts, in which scholars have agreed to recognize three versions of the text, called respectively the A-text, written soon after 1362; the B-text, written about 1378; and the C-text, written in 1398 or 1399. Each text contains two distinct parts (though they are not generally distinguished in the manuscripts), namely, The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman and the Vision of the same concerning Do-well, Do-better, and Do-best. The standard editions of these texts are those of Dr W. W. Skeat, published by the Early English Text Society, in four volumes, in 1867-84, and by the Clarendon Press in two volumes, 1886. The various known manuscripts are written in a mixture of the Midland and Southern dialects of Middle English, somewhat influenced by the Western dialect; but they vary considerably, both in dialect and text. That on which Professor Skeat based his B-text is MS. Laud Misc. 581 in the Bodleian Library.

THE AUTHOR. The authorship of this poem has been the subject of a wordy and involved dispute among literary historians and critics. The traditional view, resting partly on external but mainly on internal evidence, was that the author's christening name was William, for he refers to himself as Will in several passages, and his name is given as William in most of the manuscripts; that his surname was Langland (which is given in two early manuscripts, one of which adds the information that he was son of one Stacy de Rokayle, who held land at Shipton-under-Wychwood); that he was born at Cleobury Mortimer about 1332 (according to a writer one hundred and fifty years later); that he was put to school, probably with the Benedictines at Great Malvern; that he became a clerk in minor orders and wrote *The Book concerning Piers Plowman* (A-text) shortly after he had gone to London, where he later re-wrote and enlarged the poem (B-text); and he lived for many years on Cornhill with his wife Kit and his daughter Kalote (that he married accounts for his not

being further ordained); that he earned a precarious and poor living by such clerical means (in both senses) as he might, that he wore the clerical tonsure and dress, and that he was so tall as to be known familiarly as Long Will; that he again revised his poem (C-text), and died we know not when nor where.

With minor variations this account of the writer and the writing of the poem was accepted without question until the beginning of this century, when Professor J. M. Manly produced a theory, supported by textual evidence, that the poem was written not by one but by five persons: not, of course, in concert, but as independent editors and continuers. This provoked a very pretty battle of the kind in which literary historians and textual critics delight. Dr Furnivall and Dr Henry Bradley, with some hesitation, supported the conclusions of Professor Manly; and M. Jusserand led the single-author party, whose case was strengthened by the researches of Professor R. W. Chambers: articles, replies, pamphlets, rejoinders, letters and counter-letters were written and published; Langland was 'on trial for his life,' he was sentenced, hanged, drawn, quartered, and resuscitated—several times over.

But in spite of the difficulties raised by these learned men, it may be said with confidence that the balance of literary, textual, philological, and metrical evidence is still on the side of a single author; and that this author was William Langland has found fresh and valuable support in later investigations of a kind too little used in the solving of literary and historical puzzles, namely, research, inquiry, and observation in the neighbourhood concerned. It appears clear from the work of Mr Allan H. Bright (*New Light on 'Piers Plowman,'* Oxford, 1928) that we may continue to hold undisturbed the traditional account of Long Will, with two important modifications, namely, that he was born not at Cleobury in Cheshire but at Ledbury in Herefordshire, and that he was the *illegitimate* son of Stacy de Rokayle.

THIS VERSION. Of the prologue and first seven *passus* of the B-text, for the version of which herein I alone am responsible, several translations into modern English have been made. My object in making another was simply and solely to produce a version with the minimum of alteration and verbal substitution of the Middle English text necessary for its understanding by an ordinary reader in the twentieth century. To do this, and at the same time always to retain the original alliterative metre, was

impossible; nor did this grieve me overmuch: for Langland himself kept on breaking the metrical rules, either because he was more interested in the sense than the sound, or else because he did not think regularity necessary to make a good poem—he was no ‘literary man,’ and his academic fame to-day doubtless astonishes him. I paraphrased as little as possible, preferring a few obscurities to excessive messing about with the text. Those who wish for a straightforward version, in prose and with all things made clear, cannot do better than that of Miss Kate Warren (London, 1913); for a metrical version, with the poem sacrificed to the verse, there is that of Professor Skeat (London, 1905): I used both of these for reference purposes, especially Miss Warren’s, which is an excellent piece of work.

Without the erudition and monumental labours of Professor Skeat this version would have been impossible, and I have to make acknowledgment to the Delegates of the Oxford University Press for their permission to use his B-text, the minor edition in the Clarendon Press Series, of which the ninth edition was published in 1906. I must also acknowledge my indebtedness for help and information to Mr Allan H. Bright.

THE THEME. Whatever may be the literary, philological, and historical importance of *The Book concerning Piers Plowman*, its interest to the ordinary reader is still the same as it was to its writer, namely, personal. I have said that Langland was not a ‘literary man,’ least of all in the self-conscious modern sense—perhaps the expression has no other sense: anyway, he was not primarily a man of art but a man of prudence, in fact, a moralist. And his poem is a tract. Therein is its interest to-day as in the fourteenth century; that is why it is republished in cheap editions and read by others beside professors and students. However much human nature may change superficially, men continue to have a bias towards inordinate behaviour in thought, word, and deed, and so long as we have that characteristic, whether the resulting disorder be regarded as ‘sinful’ or as simply ‘anti-social,’ so long will moralists, professional or amateur, rise up and endeavour to reduce us to the ways of virtue.

And the miserable sinners, however unwilling we may be to be cured of our distemper, are far from being uninterested in the attempts to do so; some even acquire considerable skill in criticism of the efforts; and this interest in our physicians is not an exhibition of diabolical cynicism. For we know that the

moralist is really in the right of it; that the heart of man does tend to be desperately wicked—however you like to account for it; that left to ourselves we shall make a hell of this world and deserve the same in the next; that God is not mocked.

So Langland's poem is read, not indeed deliberately as an ascetical exercise, but because it is a good tract, a bit of moralist's work well done: the poem and the argument are one thing, and that thing gratifies our mind in general and satisfies our conscience in particular.

Those who have never read the book commonly suppose it to be an attack on the iniquities of those in places of power and advantage, especially of spiritual authority: that the author was a morning-star of the Reformation and a forerunner of what is called modern democracy. This is a complete misunderstanding. Langland was a faithful son of the medieval Church, and his politics were anything but 'radical': the State should be governed by a Prince, the personification but not the nominee or the tool of his people, whom he rules with the aid of Conscience and Reason. And his attack on wickedness and abuses was not by way of direct denouncement, of rhetoric (in its improper sense), or a playing on the feelings of a mob; but a logical explanation directed at common sense and right reason. 'This,' he said in effect, 'is how you behave, poor and rich, lowly as well as great. Of course it must follow that the world is in a mess and you are unhappy.' There is none of the demagoguery which flatters our self-esteem and tickles our lust for change, telling us what fine fellows we are and that it is our institutions that are at fault. On the contrary. He makes it clear enough to his contemporaries that their institutions were all right, but their human weakness and ill-will misused them or made them helpless. 'Christianity has been tried and has failed.' 'It has not failed because it has not been tried.' Langland's one remedy for the troubles of his day was religion: he was therefore not a social reformer in the classical sense.

The efforts of moralists, especially Christian moralists, are less effective than they should be, and bring down dislike and contempt on their makers, because the impression is so often given that the moralist views with jealousy, or is trying improperly to narrow the bounds of, lawful human enjoyment. The notion is quite wrong and quite understandable. The average professional moralist has only average insight, energy, enthusiasm, and spirituality, and so he takes the easiest line, concentrates on the

more obviously disorderly actions and abuses of acts intrinsically good, and denounces and exhorts with a lamentable lack of discrimination and finesse, meeting exaggeration with exaggeration.

Not so Langland. 'Chastity without charity shall be chained in Hell,' he says, and has done. Charity, that is, not a vague benevolence, a 'universal embrace,' or even just refraining from adverse speech and being kind (especially to those one likes), but the habit or virtue which enables men to love God above all things for His own sake and for His sake to love all their fellow men; the *agape* of St Paul. It goes to the root of the matter, psychologically, theologically, and spiritually. He does not exhort his hearers to fantastic penances, to heroic renunciations, to revolutionary changes, to action against their proper state and personal nature: the rich are not abused for being rich, but told to have pity on the poor; the poor are to work and not over-reach their neighbours; the monk is not told to leave his cloister and get busy in the world, for prayer is work, and Christ ordained the contemplative life; those who will not work shall be coerced by Hunger, yet no beggar must be refused *quia incertum pro quo Deo magis placeas*; trade is not condemned, but merchants must try to be honest (Langland does not seem very hopeful about this); neither is the law condemned, but lawyers must observe equity; nothing shall be done out of measure. In a word, he preaches on the text of St Augustine: *Dilige et quod vis fac*, Love, and do what you will.

Joined with Charity as handmaidens of Truth (God the Father) is Reason. Charity is not personified in the poem, but Reason is, and the part he plays may be studied profitably both by those who have old-fashioned ideas about the 'ages of faith' and those who have new-fashioned and sub-human ideas about the worthlessness of intellectual processes. To Reason Conscience appeals against his projected wedding to Meed ('Graft'); with Conscience he is made the perpetual counsellor of the King; and his sermon moves the Deadly Sins to confess themselves to Repentance. Then, and not till then, towards the end of Passus V, does Piers himself appear on the scene, and he quickly develops from the hard-working, God-fearing yeoman farmer, taught by Truth through Conscience and Mother-Wit, into what is practically an incarnation of God the Son, embodying in himself Reason, Conscience, Mother-Wit, and the rest. Christ, as man, is the common man, Piers Plowman. To him God the Father

entrusts the dispensing of a bull of pardon surpassing all others, that supreme indulgence which is man's Redemption and the price of which is good deeds, both spiritual and corporal.

DONALD ATTWATER.

1930.

The second part of the poem, *The Vision of Do-well, Do-better, and Do-best*, is a broadening and deepening of the theme. The strictures on the life of the world, and especially on the ways of church dignitaries in relation to that world, are still there in abundance. But Langland is primarily examining the fundamental principles on which his strictures rest. What is in fact 'the good life'? What is it to do well, to do better, and to do best? His illustrations and parallels are many and varied, but they are finally all taken up into the life of our Lord, and especially His death and resurrection. The poem, however, does not end on any such devotional climax. In Passus XIX Langland returns, or rather goes forward, to the church of to-day, as it were, working, suffering, fighting the arrayed forces of evil and betrayals from within not always with conspicuous success. Finally Conscience, in great distress, sets out to seek Piers the Plowman--Langland's continued symbol of integrity, from the man working in the field to Christ Himself. The pilgrimage has only just begun.

In making a version of the B-text of *The Vision of Do-well, Do-better, and Do-best* I have followed the same principles as those which directed the version of *The Vision of Piers Plowman*; that is, making changes only as it was necessary for clarification for the modern reader. It has been attempted to preserve the style of Langland, his own peculiar 'flavour,' which includes not only variety but a lack of academic care (if we do not call it carelessness) which makes such treatment not only possible but rewarding.

RACHEL ATTWATER.

1957.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

EDITIONS. W. W. Skeat: *The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman*. 2 vols. Oxford, 1886 (the standard edition of all three texts); *Publications of the Early English Text Society*, Nos. 28, 38, 54, 81 (separate editions of A, B, and C Texts, with notes and glosses).

TRANSLATIONS. W. W. Skeat: *The Vision of Piers Plowman*, London (1906); K. M. Warren: *The Vision of Piers the Plowman*, London (1913) (Prose. Prologue and Passus, B Text); H. W. Wells: *The Vision of Piers Plowman*, London (1935) (Verse. Whole poem); N. K. Coghill: *Visions from Piers Plowman*, London (1949) (Verse. Selections); J. F. Goodridge: *Piers the Ploughman*, Harmondsworth (1959) (Prose. Complete poem, B Text).

STUDIES. (a) General

D. Chadwick: *Social Life in the Days of Piers Plowman*, Cambridge (1922); R. W. Chambers: 'Long Will, Dante, and the Righteous Heathen,' *Essays and Studies*, 9; N. K. Coghill: 'The Character of Piers Plowman considered from the B Text,' in *Medium Aevum*, 2. 108-135, 1933; F. A. R. Carnegy: *The Relations between the Social and Divine Order in William Langland's Vision*, Breslau (1934); G. Hort: *Piers Plowman and Contemporary Religious Thought*, London (1938); R. W. Chambers: *Man's Unconquerable Mind*, chs. 4 and 5, London (1939); N. K. Coghill: *The Pardon of Piers Plowman*, London (1946).

(b) Authorship, date, construction

The Piers Plowman Controversy. Publications of the Early English Text Society, 139. Extra issue, 1910 (essays by Jusserand, Manly, Chambers, and Bradley); R. W. Chambers: 'Text of Piers Plowman: Critical Methods,' in *Modern Language Review* (Cambridge), 11. 257-275 (1916); 'The Three Texts of Piers Plowman and their Grammatical Forms,' in *Modern Language Review*, 14. 129-51 (1919); 'The Text of Piers Plowman' (with Grattan) in *Modern Language Review*, 26. 1-51 (1926); A. H. Bright: *New Light on 'Piers Plowman'*, London (1928); J. A. W. Bennett: 'The Date of the B Text of Piers Plowman' in *Medium Aevum*, 11. 55-64 (1943); G. H. Gerould: 'The Structural Integrity of Piers Plowman' in *Studies in English Philology*, 45. 60-75 (1948); J. R. Hulbert: 'Piers the Plowman after Forty Years' in *Modern Philology* (Chicago), 45. 215-25 (1948); B. F. Huppé: 'Piers Plowman: the Date of the B Text Reconsidered' in *Studies in English Philology*, 46. 6-13 (1949).

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The Donald Attwater translation of *The Vision* is reproduced here by arrangement with Messrs Cassell & Co. Ltd. *Do-well, Do-better and Do-best* is based on Dr Skeat's edition (1886) by permission of the Clarendon Press, Oxford.

CONTENTS

PAGE

<i>Introduction</i>	v
<i>Select Bibliography</i>	xi
<i>Publisher's Note</i>	xiii

THE VISION

Prologus	1
Passus I	7
Passus II	13
Passus III	19
Passus IV	28
Passus V	33
Passus VI	51
Passus VII	60

DO-WELL, DO-BETTER, DO-BEST

Passus VIII	66
Passus IX	70
Passus X	76
Passus XI	89
Passus XII	101
Passus XIII	110
Passus XIV	123
Passus XV	133
Passus XVI	150
Passus XVII	158
Passus XVIII	167
Passus XIX	179
Passus XX	192
<i>Notes</i>	202

The poem is written in the traditional long alliterative line which is divided in two by a caesura, each part being linked by alliteration or 'initial rhyme.' In the present rendering this pause is indicated by a space.

INCIPIT LIBER
DE PETRO PLOWMAN

PROLOGUS

IN a summer season when soft was the sun,
I clothed myself in a cloak as I shepherd were,
Habit like a hermit's unholy in works,
And went wide in the world wonders to hear.
But on a May morning on Malvern hills,
A marvel befell me of fairy, methought.
I was weary with wandering and went me to rest
Under a broad bank by a brook's side,
And as I lay and leaned over and looked into the waters
I fell into a sleep for it sounded so merry.

Then began I to dream a marvellous dream,
That I was in a wilderness wist I not where.
As I looked to the east right into the sun,
I saw a tower on a toft worthily built;
A deep dale beneath a dungeon therein,
With deep ditches and dark and dreadful of sight.
A fair field full of folk found I in between,
Of all manner of men the rich and the poor,
Working and wandering as the world asketh.
Some put them to plow and played little enough,
At setting and sowing they sweated right hard
And won that which wasters by gluttony destroy.

Some put them to pride and apparelled themselves so
In a display of clothing they came disguised.

To prayer and penance put themselves many,
All for love of our Lord living hard lives,
In hope for to have heavenly bliss.

Such as anchorites and hermits that kept them in their cells,
And desired not the country around to roam;
Nor with luxurious living their body to please.

And some chose trade they fared the better,
As it seemeth to our sight that such men thrive.

And some to make mirth as minstrels know how,
 And get gold with their glees guiltlessly, I hold.
 But jesters and janglers children of Judas,
 Feigning their fancies and making folk fools,
 They have wit at will to work, if they would;
 Paul preacheth of them I'll not prove it here—
Qui turpiloquium loquitur is Lucifer's hind.

Tramps and beggars went quickly about,
 Their bellies and their bags with bread well crammed;
 Cadging for their food fighting at ale;
 In gluttony, God knows going to bed,
 And getting up with ribaldry the thieving knaves!
 Sleep and sorry sloth ever pursue them.

Pilgrims and palmers pledged them together
 To seek Saint James and saints in Rome.
 They went forth on their way with many wise tales,
 And had leave to lie all their life after—
 I saw some that said they had sought saints:
 Yet in each tale that they told their tongue turned to lies
 More than to tell truth it seemed by their speech.

Hermits, a heap of them with hooked staves,
 Were going to Walsingham and their wenches too;
 Big loafers and tall that loth were to work,
 Dressed up in capes to be known from others;
 And so clad as hermits their ease to have.

I found there friars¹ of all the four orders,
 Preaching to the people for profit to themselves,
 Explaining the Gospel just as they liked,
 To get clothes for themselves they construed it as they would.
 Many of these master friars may dress as they will,
 For money and their preaching both go together.
 For since charity hath been chapman and chief to shrive lords,
 Many miracles have happened within a few years.
 Except Holy Church and they agree better together,
 Great mischief on earth is mounting up fast.

There preached a pardoner² as if he priest were:
 He brought forth a brief with bishops' seals thereon,
 And said that himself might absolve them all
 From falseness in fasting and of broken vows.

Laymen believed him welcomed his words,

¹ See page 202.

² See page 202.

And came up on their knees to kiss his seals;
 He cozened them with his brevet dimmed their eyes,
 And with his parchment got his rings and brooches:
 Thus they gave their gold gluttons to keep.
 And lend it to such louts as follow lechery.

If the bishop were holy and worth both his ears,
 His seal should not be sent to deceive the people.
 But a word 'gainst bishop the knave never preacheth.
 Parish priest and pardoner share all the silver
 That the parish poor would have if he were not there.

Parsons and parish priests complained to the bishop
 That their parishes were poor since the pestilence time,
 And asked leave and licence in London to dwell
 And sing *requiems* for stipends for silver is sweet.

Bishops and bachelors¹ both masters and doctors,
 That have charge under Christ and the tonsure as token
 And sign that they should shrive their parishioners,
 Preach and pray for them and feed the poor,
 These lodge in London in Lent and at other times too.
 Some serve the king and his silver count
 In Chequer and Chancery courts making claim for his debts
 Of wards and of wardmotes waifs and estrays.
 And some serve as servants to lords and ladies,
 And instead of stewards sit in session to judge.
 Their Mass and their matins their canonical hours,
 Are said undevoutly I fear at the last

Lest Christ in his council accurse will full many.
 I perceived of the power that Peter had to keep,
 To bind and to unbind as the Book telleth,
 How he left it with love as our Lord ordained,
 Amongst four virtues the best of all virtues,
 That cardinal are called for they hinge the gates
 Where Christ is in glory to close and to shut
 And to open it to them and show heavenly bliss.
 But of cardinals at Rome that received that name
 And power presumed in them a pope to make,
 To have Peter's power deny it I will not;
 For to love and learning that election belongeth,
 Therefore I can, and yet cannot of that court speak more.

Then came there a king with knighthood before him,

¹ See page 202.

The might of the commons made him to reign;
 Then came Mother-Wit and he made wise clerks
 For to counsel the king and the commons save.

The king and the knighthood the clergy as well,
 Planned that the commons should provide for themselves.

The commons contrived of Mother-Wit, crafts,
 And for profit of all they plowmen ordained
 To till and travail as true life asketh.

The king and the commons and Mother-Wit too
 Cause by law and loyalty each man to know his own.

Then looked up a lunatic a lean thing withal,
 And kneeling before the king well speaking said:
 'Christ keep thee sir King and thy kingdom,
 And grant thee to rule the realm so Loyalty may love thee,
 And for thy rightful ruling be rewarded in heaven.'

Then in the air on high an angel of heaven
 Stooped and spoke in Latin for simple men could not
 Discuss nor judge that which should justify them,
 But should suffer and serve therefore said the angel:

*'Sum Rex, sum Princeps: neutram fortasse deinceps;
 O qui jura regis Christi specialia regis, hoc quod agas melius justus es,
 esto pius!'*

*Nudum jus a te vestiri vult pietate; qualia vis metere talia grana sere.
 Si jus nudatur nudo de jure metatur; si seritur pietas de pietate metas.'*

Then an angry buffoon a glutton of words,
 To the angel on high answered after:

*'Dum rex a regere dicatur nomen habere,
 Nomen habet sine re nisi studet jura tenere.'*

Then began all the commons to cry out in Latin,
 For counsel of the king construe how-so he would:

'Praecepta regis sunt nobis vincula legis.'

¹ With that there ran a rout of rats at once,
 And small mice with them more than a thousand,
 And came to a council for their common profit;
 For a cat from the Court came when he liked
 And o'er leaped them lightly and caught them at will,
 Played with them perilously and pushed them about.
 'For dread of divers dangers we dare not look about;
 If we grumble at his game he will attack us all,
 Scratch us or clutch us and in his claws hold us,

¹ See page 202.

So that we loathe life ere he lets us go.
 Could we with any wit his will withstand
 We might be lords above him and live at our ease.'

A rat of renown most ready of tongue
 Said, as a sovereign help to himself:
 'I have seen men,' quoth he 'in the city of London
 Bearing bright necklaces about their necks,
 Some with collars of skilful work uncoupled they wander
 Both in warrens and wastes wherever they like;
 And otherwhile they are elsewhere as I tell you.
 Were there a bell on their collars by Jesus, I think
 Men might know where they went and get out of their way!
 And right so,' quoth that rat 'reason me showeth
 To buy a brass bell or one of bright silver
 Make it fast to a collar for our common profit,
 And hang it on the cat's neck then we may hear
 When he romps or rests or runneth to play.
 And if he wants play then we may look out
 And appear in his presence the while he play liketh,
 And if he gets angry, beware and shun all his paths.'
 All this rout of rats to this plan assented.
 But though the bell was bought and on the collar hanged,
 There was not a rat in the rout for all the realm of France
 That dare bind on the bell about the cat's neck,
 Nor hang it round her ears all England to win;
 They held themselves not bold and their counsel feeble,
 Esteemed their labour as lost and all their long plotting.

A mouse that knew much more as it seemed to me,
 Ran forth determined and stood before them all,
 And to the rout of rats rehearsed these words:
 'Though we killed the cat yet there would come another,
 To scratch us and all our kind though we creep under benches.
 Therefore I counsel all the commons to let the cat be,
 And be we never so bold to show to him the bell;
 For I heard my sire say now seven years ago,
 "When the cat is a kitten the Court is right wretched,"
 As witnesseth Holy Writ whoso will it read:

"Vae tibi, terra, cujus rex puer est."

No man can have rest there for the rats by night;
 While the cat catcheth conies he covets not our carrion,
 But feeds himself on venison may we never defame him!

For better is a little loss than a long sorrow;
 He's the fear among us all whereby we miss worse things.
 For many men's malt we mice would destroy,
 And the riot of rats would rend men's clothes,
 Were it not for that Court cat that can leap in among you;
 For had ye rats your will ye could not rule yourselves.
 As for me,' quoth the mouse 'I see so much to come
 That cat nor kitten never shall by my counsel be harmed,
 Nor carping of this collar that cost me nothing.
 Though it had cost me full dear I would not own to it
 But suffer him to live and do just as he liketh:
 Coupled and uncoupled to catch what they can.
 Therefore each wise wight I warn to watch well his own.'

What this dream meaneth ye men that be merry,
 Divine ye, for I never dare by dear God in heaven!

There hovered an hundred in caps of silk,
 Serjeants they seemed who practised at Bar,
 Pleading the law for pennies and pounds,
 And never for love of our Lord unloosing their lips.
 You might better measure the mist on the Malvern hills,
 Than get a sound out of their mouth unless money were showed.

Barons and burgesses and bondmen also
 I saw in this crowd as you shall hear later.
 Bakers and brewers and butchers a-many,
 Woollen-websters and weavers of linen,
 Tailors and tinkers toll-takers in markets,
 Masons and miners and men of all crafts.
 Of all kinds of labourers there stood forth some;
 Ditchers and diggers that do their work ill
 And spend all the day singing '*Dieu vous sauve, dame Emme!*'
 Cooks and their knaves cried 'Pies, hot pies!
 Good pork and good goose! Come, dine! Come, dine!'

Taverners unto them told the same tale:
 'White wine of Alsace red wine of Gascony,
 Wine of the Rhine, of Rochelle to help settle your meat!'
 All this I saw sleeping and seven times more.

PASSUS I

WHAT this mountain meaneth and the dark dale
And the field full of folk I fairly will show.
A lady, lovely of looks in linen clothed,
Came down from a castle and called me fairly
And said: 'Son, sleepest thou? Seest thou this people,
How busy they be about all the throng?
The most part of this people that passeth on earth,
Have worship in this world and wish for no better;
Of other heaven than here they hold no account.'

I was feared of her face though she were so fair,
And said, 'Mercy, madam what is this to mean?'
'The tower on the toft,' quoth she 'Truth is therein
And would have that ye do as his word teacheth;
For he is Father of Faith formed you all
Both with flesh and with face and gave you fine wits
To worship him therewith while that ye are here.
Therefore he hath bade the earth to help you each one
With woollen, with linen with food at your need,
In reasonable measure to make you at ease.

'And commanded of his courtesy three things in common.
None are needful but those and name them I will
And reckon them rightly rehearse thou them after.
The first one is vesture to save thee from chill;
And meat for meals to save thee misease
And drink when thou art dry but do naught out of reason
Lest thy worth be wanting when thou shouldest work.

'For Lot in his lifetime for liking of drink
Did with his daughters what the Devil liked.
He delighted in drink as the Devil wished,
And Lechery was gainer and lay with them both,
Putting blame on the wine for that wicked deed:

*Inebriamus eum vino, dormiamusque cum eo, ut servare possimus de
patre nostro semen.*

Through wine and through women there was Lot overcome,
Begetting in gluttony boys that were blackguards.

Therefore dread delicious drink and thou shalt do the better;
 Measure is medicine though thou yearn for much.
 All is not good for the spirit that the guts asketh,
 Nor livelihood to thy body that is life to the soul.
 Believe not thy body for him a liar teacheth:

That is, the wretched world which would thee betray.
 For the fiend and thy flesh follow thee together;
 This and that chaseth thy soul and speak in thine heart;
 That thou shouldest be ware I teach thee the best.'

'Madam, mercy,' quoth I 'I like well your words.
 But the money of this earth that men hold to so fast,
 Tell me, madam, to whom that treasure belongeth?'

'Go to the Gospel,' quoth she 'that God spoke himself,
 When the people posed him with a penny in the Temple,
 Whether they should therewith worship king Caesar.
 And God asked of them of whom spake the writing
 And likewise the image that stood thereon?

"*Caesaris*," they said "Each one sees him well."

"*Reddite Caesari*," quoth God "that *Caesari* belongeth,
Et quae sunt Dei, Deo or else ye do ill."

For rightful Reason should rule you all,
 And Mother-Wit be warden your wealth to keep,
 And tutor of your treasure to give it you at need;
 For husbandry and they hold well together.'
 Then I asked her plainly by him that made her,
 'That dungeon in the dale that dreadful is to see,
 What may it mean *ma dame*, I beseech you?'

'That is the castle of Care whoso cometh therein
 May curse he was born in body or in soul.
 Therein abideth a wight that is called Wrong,
 Father of Falsehood who built it himself.
 Adam and Eve he egged on to ill;
 Counsell'd Cain to kill his brother;
 Judas he jockeyed with Jewish silver,
 And then on an elder hanged him after.
 He is the letter of love and lieth to all;
 Those who trust in his treasure betrayeth he soonest.'

Then had I wonder in my wit what woman it were
 That such wise words of Holy Writ showed,
 And asked her in the high name ere she thence went,
 Who indeed she was that taught me so fairly?

'Holy Church I am,' quoth she 'thou oughtest me to know.
I received thee first and taught thee the faith,
And thou broughtest me sponsors my bidding to fulfil
And to love me loyally while thy life lasteth.'

Then I fell on my knees and cried of her grace,
And prayed her piteously to pray for my sins,
And to teach me kindly on Christ to believe,
That I might work his will that made of me man.

'Show me no treasure but tell me this only—
How may I save my soul thou that holy art held?'

'When all treasures are tried,' quoth she 'truth is the best;
I appeal to *Deus caritas* to tell thee truth;
It is as dear a darling as dear God himself.

'Whoso is true of his tongue and telleth none other,
And doth works therewith and willeth no man ill:
He is a god, says the Gospel on earth and in heaven,
And like to our Lord by Saint Luke's own words.
The clergy that know this should tell it about,
For Christian and heathen alike claim the truth.

'Kings and their knights all should care for it rightly;
Ride to reach the oppressors all round the realms,
And take *transgressores* tying them tightly,
Till Truth had determined the tale of their trespass.
That profession plainly pertaineth to knights;
Not to fast on one Friday in five score winters,
But hold with him and with her that desireth all truth
And never leave them for love nor for seizing of silver.

'For David in his days dubbed knights,
And swore them on their swords to serve Truth ever;
And whoso passed that point *apostata* was from the order.

'But Christ, king of all kings ten orders knighted,
Cherubim and Seraphim seven such and one other,
And gave them might of his majesty the merrier they thought it;
And over his common court made them archangels,
Taught them by the Trinity the truth to know
And to bow to his bidding he bade them naught else.

'Lucifer with his legions learned it in Heaven,
But because he obeyed not his bliss he did lose,
And fell from that fellowship in a fiend's likeness
Into a deep dark hell to dwell there for ever;
And more thousands with him than man could number

Leapt out with Lucifer in loathly form:
 For they believed in him that lied in this manner—

Ponam pedem in aquilone, et similis ero altissimo.

‘And all that hoped it might be so no Heaven might hold them;
 They fell out in fiend’s likeness nine days together,
 Till God of his goodness steadied and stayed
 Made the heavens to be shut and stand so in quiet.

‘When these wicked went out wonderwise they fell;
 Some in air, some in earth and some in deep hell;
 But Lucifer lowest lieth of them all.

For the pride he put on his pain hath no end;
 And all that work wrong wander they shall
 After their death day and dwell with that wretch.
 But those that work well as holy writ telleth,
 And end, as I have said in truth, that is best,
 May be sure that their soul shall wend to Heaven,
 Where Truth is in Trinity and enthroneth them all.
 Therefore I say, as I said in sight of these texts,
 When all treasures are tried Truth is the best.
 Learn these unlearned for lettered men know it,
 That Truth is treasure the best tried on earth.’

‘Yet have I no natural knowing,’¹ quoth I ‘ye must teach me better,
 By what craft of my body begins it, and where.’

‘Thou doting duffer,’ quoth she ‘dull are thy wits;
 Too little Latin thou learnest man, in thy youth;

Heu mihi, quod sterilem duxi vitam juvenilem!

‘It is natural knowing,’ quoth she ‘that teacheth thine heart
 For to love thy good Lord liefer than thyself;
 No deadly sin to do die though thou shouldest:
 This I trow to be Truth who can teach thee better,
 See you suffer him to say and then teach it after.
 For thus witnesseth his words work thou thereafter;
 For Truth telleth that Love is the remedy of Heaven;
 No sin may be seen in him that useth that sort,
 And all his works he wrought with Love as he listed;
 And taught it Moses for the best thing and most like to Heaven
 With the plant of peace most precious of virtues.

‘For Heaven might not hold it so heavy of itself,
 Till it had of the earth eaten its fill.

‘And when it had of this fold flesh and blood taken,

¹ See page 202.

Never was leaf upon linden lighter thereafter,
And pricking and piercing as the point of a needle,
That no armour might stay it nor any high walls.

‘Therefore is Love leader of the Lord’s folk of Heaven,
And a mean, as the mayor is between king and commons;
Right so is Love a leader and the law shapeth,
Upon man for his misdeeds he fixeth the fine.
And for to know it by nature it springeth in might,
In the heart is its head and there its well-spring.

‘For in natural knowing there might beginneth
That comes from the Father that formed us all,
Looked on us with love and let his Son die
Meekly for our misdeeds to amend us all;
And yet would he them no woe that wrought him that pain,
But meekly with his mouth mercy he besought
To have pity of that people that pained him to death.

‘Here might thou see examples in himself alone,
That he was mightful and meek and mercy did grant
To them that hanged him on high and pierced his heart.

‘Therefore I rede you rich to have pity on the poor;
Though ye be mighty at law be meek in your works.

‘For the same measures that ye mete amiss or aright,
Ye shall be weighed therewith when ye wend hence;

Eadem mensura qua mensi fueritis, remetietur vobis.

‘For though ye be true of your tongue and honestly earn,
And as chaste as a child that weepeth in church,
Unless ye love loyally and give to the poor,
Such goods as God sends you to them gladly giving,
Ye have no more merit in Mass or in hours
Than Malkin of her maidenhood that no man desireth.

‘For James the gentle judged in his books
That faith without deed is right nothing worth
And as dead as a door-post unless actions follow;

Fides sine operibus mortua est, etc.

‘Therefore chastity without charity shall be chained in hell;
It is lacking as a lamp that no light is in.
Many churchmen are chaste but their charity is away;
Are no men more avaricious when they be advanced:
Unkind to their kin and to all Christian folk,
They chew up their charity and chide after more.
Such chastity without charity shall be chained in hell.

'Many pastors keep themselves clean in their bodies
But are cumbered with covetousness they can not drive it from them
So hardly hath avarice hasped them together.
And that is no truth of the Trinity but treachery of hell,
Lessoning the unlearned to withhold their alms.

'Therefore these words are written in the Gospel,
Date et dabitur vobis for I give to you all.
And that is the lock of Love that letteth out my grace
To comfort the care-full encumbered with sin.

'Love is leech of life and next our Lord's self,
And also the right road that runneth unto Heaven;
Therefore I say as I said before by the texts,
When all treasures be tried Truth is the best.
Now have I told thee what Truth is that no treasure is better;
I may linger no longer thee with now look on thee our Lord!'

PASSUS II

YET I knelt on my knees and cried of her grace,
And said: 'Mercy, Madame for Mary's love of Heaven,
That bore that blissful Child that bought us on the rood,
Teach me by some skilled way Falsehood to know.'

'Look upon thy left side and lo! where he standeth,
Both Falsehood and Flattery and their many fellows!'

I looked on my left side as the lady taught me,
And was ware of a woman worthily clothed,
With fringes of fur the finest on earth,
Crowned with a crown the king hath no better
Featly her fingers were framed with gold wire,
And thereon red rubies as red as any coal,
And diamonds of dearest price and two kinds of sapphires,
Orientals and beryls poison banes to destroy.

Her robe was full rich of red scarlet dyed,
With ribands of red gold and of richest stones;
Her array me ravished such riches saw I never;
I had wonder what she was and whose wife she were.

'What is this woman,' quoth I 'so worthily attired?'
'That is Meed¹ the Maid,' quoth she 'who hath vexed me full oft,
And lied of my lover that Loyalty is called,
And slandered him to lords that have to guard laws;
In the pope's palace familiar as myself,
Though truth would not so for she is a bastard.

'For Flattery was her father that had a fickle tongue
And never said sooth since he came to earth.
And Meed is mannered after him right as nature requireth;

Qualis pater, talis filius bona arbor bonum fructum facit.

'I ought to be higher than she my birth is the better.
My father the great God is and ground of all graces,
One infinite God and I his good daughter;
And he gave me Mercy to marry with myself.
And what man be merciful and loyally me love
Shall be my lord, I his lover in highest Heaven.

'And what man taketh Meed mine head dare I lay
That he shall lose for her love a lot of *caritatis*.
How construeth David the king of men that take Meed

¹ See page 202.

And of men of this mould that maintaineth Truth
And how ye shall save yourselves the Psalter beareth witness:

Domine, quis habitabit in tabernaculo tuo, etc.

'And now will Meed be married all to a cursed wretch,
To one False-Fickle-Tongue offspring of a fiend.
Flattery through his fair speech hath this folk enchanted,
And all is Liar's leading that she is thus wedded.

'To-morrow will be made the maiden's bridal,
And there might thou know if thou wilt which they be all
That belong to that lordship the less and the more.
Know them there if thou canst and keep thy tongue still,
Blame them not, but let be till Loyalty be judge
And have power to punish them then put forth thy plaint.

'I commend thee to Christ,' quoth she 'and his clean mother,
And may no conscience cumber thee for coveting of Meed.'

Thus left me that lady there lying asleep.
And how Meed was married meseemed in a dream
That all the rich retinue that with Falsehood reign
Were bidden to the bridal on both the two sides
Of all manner of men the mean and the rich.
To marry this maiden was many man assembled,
As of knights and of clerks and other common people,
Assessors and summoners¹ sheriffs and their clerks,
Beadles and bailiffs and brokers of wares,
Couriers and victuallers advocates of the Arches—
I cannot reckon the rout that ran about Meed.

But Simony and Civil Law and assessors of courts
Were most privy with Meed of any man, methought.
But Flattery was the first that fetched her out of bower,
And like a broker brought her to be with Falsehood joined.
When Simony and Civil Law saw the will of them both,
They assented, for silver to say as both would.
Then leapt Liar forth and said 'Lo here! a charter
That Guile with his great oaths gave them together,'
And prayed Civil Law see and Simony read it.
Then Simony and Civil Law stand they forth both
And unfold the enfeoffment that Falsehood hath made,
And thus being these fellows to read out full loud:

'Sciant praesentes et futuri, etc.

'Wit ye and witness ye that wander on this earth,

¹ See page 202.

That Meed is married more for her goods
Than for any virtue or fairness or generous nature.
Falseness is fain of her for he knows her riches;
And Flattery with fickle speech invests them by charter
To be princes in pride poverty to despise,
To backbite and to boast and false witness to bear,
To scorn and to scold and slander to make,
Disobedient, and bold to break the Ten Laws.

‘And the earldom of Envy and of Wrath together,
With the stronghold of Strife and Chattering-out-of-Reason,
The county of Covetousness and its coasts about,
That is, Usury and Avarice all them I grant,
With bargains and brokerage and the borough of Theft.

‘All the lordship of Lechery in length and in breadth,
As in works and in wards and watching with eyes,
And in clothes and in wishings and with idle thoughts
Where the will gladly would but the power is weak.’

Gluttony he gave also and great oaths together,
And all day to drink at divers taverns,
There to jangle and jape and judge their fellow Christians.
And on fast days to feed before the full time
And then sit and sup till sleep them assail,
And to breed like town swine and repose at their ease,
Till sloth and sleep make sleek their sides;
And Despair to awaken them so with no will to amend;
They believe themselves lost this is their last end.

And they to have and to hold and their heirs after,
Dwelling with the Devil and damned be for ever,
With all that pertaining to purgatory in the pain of hell.
Yielding for this thing at one year’s end
Their souls to Satan to suffer with him pains
And with him to wander with woe while God is in heaven.

In witness of which thing Wrong was the first,
And Piers the pardoner of the Pauline order,
Bart the beadle of Buckinghamshire,
Reynold the reeve of Rutland soke,
Mund the miller and many more other.

‘On the date of the Devil this deed I enseal,
In sight of Sir Simony and by Civil Law’s leave.’

Then Theology was vexed when this tale he heard,
And said to Civil Law ‘Now sorrow mayest thou have,

Such weddings to wangle to work against Truth;
 And ere this wedding be wrought woe thee betide!
 'For Meed is a woman of Amends engendered,
 And God granted to give this Meed to Truth;
 Thou hast given her a beguiler now God give thee sorrow!
 Thy text telleth thee not so Truth knows the sooth,

For *dignus est operarius* his hire to have;
 Thou hast fastened her to Falsehood fie on thy law!
 For all by lying thou livest and lecherous works;
 Simony and thyself shame Holy Church;
 The notaries and thee annoy the people.
 Ye shall atone for it both by God that me made!
 Well wot ye, ye liars unless your wit fails,
 That Falsehood is faithless and false in his works,
 And was a bastard born of Beelzebub's kin.
 And Meed is a mistress a maiden of wealth,
 And might kiss the king as his cousin, if she would.

'Therefore, work ye by wisdom and by wit also,
 And lead her to London there law is declared,
 If any law will allow of their lying together.
 And though justices judge her to be joined with Falsehood,
 Yet beware of their wedding for a wise one is Truth
 And Conscience is of his council and knoweth you each one;
 And if he find you in default and with Falsehood hold,
 It shall beset your souls full sour at the last!'

Hereto assented Civil Law but Simony would not
 Till he had silver for his service and also the notaries.

Then fetched Flattery forth florins enough,
 And bade Guile to give gold all about,
 And notably to the notaries that them none might fail,
 And fee False-Witness with florins enough:
 'For he can manage Meed and make her assent.'

When this gold was given great was the thanking
 To Falsehood and Flattery for their fair gifts;
 And they came to comfort from care this Falsehood
 And said: 'Certes, sir cease shall we never
 Till Meed be thy wedded wife through the wits of us all.
 For we have Meed managed with our merry speech,
 That she granteth to go with a very good will
 To London to look if that the law would
 Adjudge you jointly in joy for ever.'

Then was Falseness fain and Flattery as blithe,
And caused all men to be summoned from the shires about,
And bade them be bound beggars and others,
To wend with them to Westminster to witness this deed.

But then looked they for horses to carry them thither,
And Flattery fetched forth then foals enough,
And set Meed on a sheriff all newly shod;
Falsehood sat on an assessor that softly trotted;
Flattery on a flatterer finely attired.

Then had notaries none annoyed they were
That Simony and Civil Law should on their feet go.

But then swore Simony and Civil Law both
That summoners should be saddled and serve them each one,
And had provisors appalled in palfrey wise.
'Sir Simony himself shall sit their backs.

'Deans and subdeans draw you together,
Archdeacons and officials and all your registrars,
Saddle them with silver our sin to sanction,
As adultery and divorces and secret usury,
To bear bishops about on visitations.

'Partisans of the Paulines¹ for plaints in consistory
Shall serve myself that Civil Law is called;
And cart-saddle the commissary our cart shall he draw
And fetch forth our victuals from fornicators' fines.

'And make of Liar a long cart to draw all these others,
Such as friars and false fellows that on their feet run.'
And thus Falsehood and Flattery fared forth together,
And Meed in the midst and all these men after.

I have no time to tell the tail that them followed,
Of many manner of men that on this mould live;
But Guile was foregoer and guided them all.

Truth saw them well and said but a little,
But pricked his palfrey and passed them all,
And came to the king's court and Conscience it told.
And Conscience to the king rehearsed it after.

'Now by Christ!' quoth the king 'if I might catch
Falsehood or Flattery or any of his fellows,
I would wreak on those wretches that work so ill,
Make them hang by the neck and all that maintain them!
Shall no man on this mould go bail for the least,

¹ See page 202.

But right as law shall allow let it fall on them all.'

And commanded a constable the first one that came,
To, 'Arrest those tyrants at any cost, I bid;
And fetter Falsehood fast in spite of any gifts
And get off Guile's head and let him go not.
And if ye light on Liar let him not escape
Ere he be put in pillory for any prayer, I bid;
And bring ye Meed to me in spite of them all.'

Dread at the door stood and the doom heard,
And how the king commanded constables and serjeants
Falseness and his fellowship to fetter and to bind.
Then Dread went quickly and warned Falsehood
And bade him flee for fear and his fellows all.

Falsehood for fear then fled to the friars.
And Guile started to go aghast for to die.
But merchants met with him and made him abide
And shut him in their shops to show their wares,
And apparelled him as a prentice the people to serve.

Lightly then Liar leaped away,
Lurking through lanes lugged about by many.
He was nowhere welcome for his many tales,
Everywhere hooted and hustled away;
Till pardoners had pity and pulled him indoors.
They washed him and wiped him and wound him in clouts;
And sent him with seals on Sundays to churches,
To give pardons ¹ for pence by pounds at a time.
Then looked at him leeches and letter they sent
That he should live with them and look at men's water.
Spicers spoke with him to inspect their wares,
For he kenned their craft and knew many gums.
But minstrels and messengers met with him once
And held him an half-year and eleven days.

Friars with fair speech fetched him thence,
And lest others should know him dressed him as a friar.
But he hath leave to leap out as oft as him liketh,
And is welcome when he will to stay with them oft.

All fled for fear and were hiding in holes;
Save Meed the Maid no man durst abide.
But truly to tell she trembled for dread,
Her hands wrung, and wept when she was arrested.

¹ See page 202.

PASSUS III

Now is Meed the Maid and no more of them all,
With beadles and bailiffs brought before the king.
The king called a clerk (I know not his name)
To take Meed the Maid and make her at ease.
'I shall try her myself and truly inquire
What man of this earth is dearest to her.
And if she works by my wisdom and my will follows
I will forgive her this guilt so me God help!'
Courteously the clerk then as the king ordered,
Took Meed by the middle and brought her indoors,
And there was mirth and minstrelsy Maid Meed to please.
They that harboured in Westminster honoured her all;
And gently with joy of the justices some,
Betook them to the bower where the bride dwelled
To comfort her kindly with Learning's leave;
And said: 'Mourn not thou Meed nor make no sorrow,
For we will counsel the king and thy way shape
To be wedded at thy will and where thy love liketh,
For all Conscience's care or craft, as I trow.'

Mildly Meed then thanked them all
For their great goodness and gave them each one
Cups of clean gold and cups of silver,
Rings also with rubies and rich things many,
The least men of her train money of gold.
Then took they their leave these lords, of Meed.

With that came clerks to comfort her too
And bade her be blithe 'for we be thine own
For to work thy will so long as thou last.'
Prettily she then promised them the same,
To 'love you loyally and lords to make,
And in consistory of the court to call out your names;
Lack of wit shall not hinder the man that I love
That he be well advanced for I am known
Where learned clerks shall be left behind.'

Then came there a confessor clothed as a friar;
To Meed the Maid he muttered these words
And said full softly in shrift as it were:

'Though ignorant men and learned had lain by thee both
 And Falseness had followed thee these fifty winters,
 I shall absolve thee myself for a horse-load of wheat,
 Also be thy bedesman and bear well thy message
 Amongst knights and clerks Conscience to turn.'

Then Meed for her misdeeds to that man kneeled,
 And shrove her of her sinfulness shamelessly, I trow,
 Told him a tale and tendered a noble
 For to be her bedesman and her broker too.

Then soon he absolved her and afterwards said:
 'We have a window a-making will mulct us in much;
 Wouldst thou glaze that gable and grave on it thy name,
 Surer should thy soul be heaven to have.'

'Wist I that,' quoth that woman 'I would not spare
 For to be your friend, friar and fail you never
 All the while you love lords that lechery haunt
 And blame not the ladies that love well the same.
 'Tis but frailty of flesh you find it in books—
 In the course of nature whereof we all come;
 If you scandal escape scathe is soon mended;
 It's the sin of the seven soonest forgiven.

'Have you mercy,' quoth Meed 'on men that it haunt
 And I shall cover your church and your cloister make,
 Your walls well whiten and their windows glaze,
 Do painting and picturing and pay for the making,
 That all seeing it shall say 'of your house I'm a sister.'

But God to all good folk such graving forbiddeth,
 To write so in windows of their worthy deeds,
 Lest pride be painted there and pomp of the world.
 For Christ knoweth thy conscience thy inmost intention,
 The cost and thy covetousness and whose was the wealth.

Therefore I advise you, lords leave ye such works,
 To write up in windows of your worthy deeds
 Or call for God's men when ye deal out doles,
 Lest ye have your reward here and your Heaven also.

Nesciat sinistra quid faciat dextra.

Let not thy left half later or sooner,
 Know what thou workest with thy right side;
 For thus bids the Gospel good men to do alms.

Mayors and mace-bearers the means are between
 The king and the commons to see the law kept,

To punish on pillories and punishment stools
Brewers and bakers butchers and cooks,
For these are this world's men that work the most harm
To the poor people that must buy piece-meal.

For they poison the people privily and oft,
Get rich by retailing and buy themselves rents
With what the poor people should put in their bellies;
For traded they truly they'd have built not so high,
Nor bought any ground-rents be full certain of that!

But now Meed the Maid the mayor hath besought
Of all such sellers silver to take,
Or presents without pence as goblets of silver,
Rings or other riches trade's frauds to maintain.

'For my love,' quoth that lady 'love them each one,
And suffer them to sell somewhat against reason.'

Solomon the sage a sermon he made
For to amend mayors and men that guard laws,
And told them this theme that I think to tell:

Ignis devorabit tabernacula eorum qui libenter accipiunt munera, etc.

Among lettered men this Latin is to mean
That fire shall fall and burn all to blue ashes
The houses and the homes of them that desire
Presents or briberies because of their office.

The king from council came and called after Meed,
And sent for her quickly with serjeants many,
That brought her to bower with bliss and with joy.

Courteously the king then commenced to talk
To Meed the Maiden speaking these words:

'Unwisely, woman wrought hast thou oft;
But worse wroughtest thou never than when Falsehood you took.
But I forgive thee that guilt and grant thee my grace;
Hence on, to thy death day do so no more!

'I have a knight, Conscience come of late from beyond.
If he willeth thee to wife wilt thou him have?'
'Yea, lord,' quoth that lady 'the Lord forbid else!
If I be not wholly at your hest let me hang soon!'

And then was Conscience called to come and appear
Before king and council the clerks and the others.
Kneeling, then Conscience to the king louted
To learn what his will were and what he should do.

'Wilt thou wed this woman,' quoth the king 'if I will assent?

For she is fain of my fellowship for to be thy mate.'
Quoth Conscience to the king 'Christ it me forbid!
Ere I wed such a wife woe me betide!
For she is frail of her faith fickle of her speech,
And maketh men misdo many score times,
Trust in her treasure betrayeth full many.
To wives and widows wantonness she teacheth,
And learneth them lechery that love her gifts.
Your father she felled through her false behest,
And hath poisoned popes and impaired Holy Church.
There is no better bawd by him that me made!
Though me search through the earth between heaven and hell.
For she is lecherous in her looks and loose in her tongue,
Common as a cart-road to each knave that walks,
To monks and to minstrels and lepers in hedges.
Assessors and summoners such men her praise;
Sheriffs of shires were ruined if she were not.
For she makes men to lose their land and life both.
She letteth pass prisoners and pays for them often,
Giveth gold to gaolers and great groats as well
To unfetter the false to flee where they like;
And taketh the true man by the top-knot and tieth him fast
And hangeth him for hatred that harm never did.
To be cursed by a council she counts not a rush,
For she clotheth the commissory and covers his clerks;
She's absolved as soon as herself liketh,
And may nigh as much do in one single month
As your secret seal in six score of days.
For she is privy with the pope provisors it know
For Sir Simony and herself seal all their bulls.
'She blesseth the bishops though they be unlearned
Provideth for parsons and priests enableth
To have lemans and lovers all through their lives
And beget them babies though the law forbids.
Where she is well with the king woe is the realm,
For she favoureth the false and fouleth truth oft.
'By Jesus! with her jewels your judges she shames,
Lieth against Law and gets in his way
That Faith may not pass by her florins are so thick.
She leadeth the law as she list and law-days maketh,
And makes men lose through her love that the law may win;

A poor person's perplexed though he plead for ever.
Law is so lordly and loth to make end;
Without presents or pence she pleaseth full few.
 'Barons and burghers she brings into sorrows,
And the commons to care that would live in truth;
For clerkship and coveting she coupleth together.
This is the life of that lady the Lord give her sorrow!
And all that maintaineth her men mischance them betide!
For poor men have no power to complain, though they smart,
Such a master is Meed among men of wealth.'

Then mourned Meed and moaned to the king
To have space to speak succeed if she might.

The king granted her grace with a good will:
'Excuse thee if thou canst I can no more say,
For Conscience accuseth thee to cast thee off for ever.'

'Nay, lord,' quoth that lady 'believe him the less,
When ye understand truly where the wrong lieth.
Where that mischief is great Maid Meed may help.
And thou knowest, Conscience I came not to chide
Nor deprave thy person with a proud heart.
Well thou knowest, liar unless thou wilt be,
How thou hast been with me eleven times,
And griped at my gold to give where thee liked;
And why thou art wrathful now a wonder methinketh.

Yet I may, if I might make to thee gifts
And maintain thy manhood more than thou knowest.
'But thou hast famed me foully before the king here.
For killed I never no king nor counselled thereafter
Nor did as thou deemest I appeal to the king!

'In Normandy was he not annoyed for my sake.
But thou thyself soothly shamedst him oft;
Crept into a cabin for cold of thy nails,
Weening that winter would have lasted for ever,
And didst dread to be dead because of the downpour
And hiedest thou homeward for hunger of guts.

'Without pity, pillager poor men thou didst spoil
And bore their brass on thy back to Calais to sell.
While I lingered with my lord his life for to save;
I made his men merry and mended their mourning
I patted their backs and emboldened their hearts
And made them hop for hope of my help at their will.

Had I been marshal of his men by Mary of heaven!
 I durst have laid my life and no less a pledge,
 He should have been lord of that land in length and in breadth,
 And also bring of that country his kin for to help—
 The least brat of his blood the peer of a baron.

‘Cowardly thou, Conscience counselled him thence
 To leave all his lordship for a little silver,
 And that the richest realm that rain hovereth over.

‘It becometh a king that keepeth a realm
 To give meed to men that meekly him serve,
 To aliens and to all men to honour them with gifts.
 Meed maketh him loved and for a man holden.
 Emperors and earls and all manner of lords
 For gifts have young men to run and to ride.
 The pope and all prelates presents accept
 And fee men themselves to maintain their laws.
 Servants for their service we see well the sooth,
 Take meed of their masters as they may agree.
 Beggars for their begging beg of men meed;
 And minstrels for their mirth meed do they ask.
 The king hath meed of his men to make peace in the land;
 Men that teach children crave of them meed.
 Priests that preach to the people for goodness, ask meed,
 And mass-pence and their meat at their meal times.
 All kinds of craftsmen crave meed for their prentice;
 Merchants and meed must needs go together.
 No wight, as I ween without me, Meed, may live.’

Quoth the king to Conscience ‘By Christ! as methinketh
 Meed is well worthy the mastery to have.’

‘Nay,’ quoth Conscience to the king and kneeled to the earth,
 ‘There are two manner of meeds my lord, with your leave.
 The one, God of his grace granteth, in his bliss,
 To those that do good deeds the while they are here.
 The prophet preacheth thereof and put it in the Psalter:

Domine, quis habitabit in tabernaculo tuo?

“Lord, who shall dwell in thy dwellings and with thy holy saints,
 Or rest on thine holy hills?” this asked David.

‘And David answered himself as the Psalter telleth:

Qui ingreditur sine macula, & operatur justitiam.

“Those spotless that enter and all of one will,
 And have wrought their works with right and with reason;

And he that useth not the life of usury,
And instructeth poor men and pursueth truth;

*Qui pecuniam suam non dedit ad usuram, et munera super innocentem,
etc.*

And all that helpeth the innocent and hold with the rightful,
And without meed do them good and the truth helpeth."

Such manner of men, lord shall have this first meed
Of God, at their great need when they go hence.

'There is another meed, measureless that masters desire.

To maintain misdoers meed they do take;

And thereof saith the psalter at a psalm's end,

*In quorum manibus iniquitates sunt, dextra eorum repleta est mun-
eribus;*

And he that graspeth her gold so me God help!

Shall abide it bitterly or the Book lieth!

'Priests and parsons that pleasure desire

And take meed and money for the masses they sing,

Receive their meed here as Matthew us teacheth:

Amen, amen, receperunt mercedem suam.

That which labourers and low folk take of their masters

Is in no manner meed but a moderate hire.

'In merchandise is no meed I may well it avow:

It is clearly exchange one pennyworth for another.

'But redest thou never *Regum*¹ thou recreant Meed,

Why the vengeance fell on Saul and his children?

God sent to Saul by Samuel the prophet

That Agag of Amalek and all his people after

Should die for a deed that their elders had done.

"So," said Samuel to Saul "God himself biddeth

Thee be true at his bidding his will to fulfil.

Wend to Amalek with thine host and what thou findest there, slay it;

Both men and their beasts burn them to death;

Widows and wives women and children,

Chattels and fixtures and all that thou findest,

Burn, and bear not away be it never so rich,

For meed nor for money look thou destroy it,

Spill it and spare it not thou shalt speed the better."

'Because he coveted cattle and the king spared,

Spared both him and his beasts the Bible witnesseth,

Otherwise than he was warned by the prophet,

¹ See page 203.

God said then to Samuel that Saul should die,
 And his seed for that sin shamefully end.
 Such a mischief Meed made King Saul to have
 That God hated him for ever and all his heirs after.
 The conclusion of this case I care not to show;
 For fear that it vex men no end will I make.
 For so is this world's way with them that have power,
 That whoso saith sooth is the soonest blamed.

'I, Conscience, know this Mother-Wit me it taught,
 That Reason shall reign and the realms govern.
 As it happened to Agag shall happen to others.
 Samuel shall slay him and Saul shall be blamed,
 And David shall be diademed and subdue them all;
 And one Christian king shall care for them all.

'Meed shall no more be master as she is now,
 But Love and Lowliness and Loyalty together,
 These shall be masters on earth Truth to save.

'And who trespasseth against Truth or traverseth his will,
 Loyalty shall judge him no living man else.
 Shall no serjeant for service wear a silk hood
 And no fur on his cloak for pleading at bar.
 Meed of many misdoers maketh more lords,
 And over the lords' laws ruleth the realms.

'But man's Love shall come yet and Conscience together,
 And make Law a labourer such love shall arise
 And such peace among the people and a perfect truth
 That Jews shall ween in their wits and wax wondrous glad,
 That Moses or Messiah be come into this earth,
 And have wonder in their hearts that men be so true.

'All that bear a dagger broad sword or lance,
 An axe or an hatchet or any weapon else
 Shall be doomed to the death if he have it not smithed
 Into sickle or scythe into plow-share or coulter.

Conflabunt gladios suos in vomeres, etc.

Each man to play with a plow a pick-axe or spade,
 Spin, or spread dung or perish in sloth.

'All priests and parsons shall hunt with *placebo*¹
 And cry upon David each day until eve.
 Hunting or hawking if any of them use,
 The boast of his benefice shall be taken from him.

¹ See page 203.

Shall neither king nor knight constable nor mayor,
 Oppress the commons nor summon to court
 Not empanel them on juries to make them plight truth
 But according to the deed done one judgment shall reward,
 Mercy or no mercy as Truth shall accord.

'King's court and common court consistory and chapter,
 All shall be but one court and one baron judge:
 Namely True-Tongue, a tidy man that troubled me never.
 Battles shall not be nor no man bear weapon,
 And what smith that any maketh be smitten therewith to death,

Non levabit gens contra gentem gladium, etc.

'And ere this fortune fall men shall find the worst,
 By six suns and a ship¹ and an half sheaf of arrows;
 And the full of the moon shall turn Jews to the Faith,
 And Saracens at that sight shall sing *Gloria in excelsis, etc.*,
 For Mahomet and Meed shall mishap at that time;

For melius est bonum nomen quam divitiæ multa.'

As wroth as the wind then waxed Meed in a while.
 'I know no Latin,' quoth she 'but clerks know the truth.
 See what Solomon saith in Wisdom book,
 That they that giveth gifts the victory win
 And much worship have therewith as holy writ telleth:

Honorem adquirit qui dat numera, etc.'

'I well believe, lady,' quoth Conscience 'that thy Latin be true;
 But thou art like a lady that once read a lesson:
 It was, *Omnia probate* and that pleased her heart
 For that line was no longer being at the leaf's end.
 Had she looked the other side and turned the leaf over,
 She would have found many words following thereafter:
Quod bonum est tenete. Truth made that text!

And so fared ye, madam! Ye couldst no more find,
 Though ye looked on Wisdom sitting in your study.
 This text that ye have told were good for the lords
 But you lacked a cunning clerk that could the leaf turn!
 And if ye seek Wisdom again find shall ye that followeth
 A full troublesome text to them that take meed;
 And that is, *animam autem auferet accipientium, etc.*
 That is the tail of the text of that that ye shewed:
 That, though we win worship and with meed have victory.
 The soul that bribes taketh is by so much in bonds.'

¹ See page 203.

PASSUS IV

'CEASE now!' saith the king 'I suffer you no longer,
Ye shall agree, forsooth and then serve me both.
Kiss her,' quoth the king 'Conscience, I bid thee.'

'Nay, by Christ!' quoth Conscience 'dismiss me for ever!
Unless Reason rede me thereto rather will I die.'

'And I command thee,' quoth the king to Conscience then,
'Be ready to ride and Reason thou fetch;
Command him that he come my counsel to hear.
For he shall rule my realm and rede me the best,
And account with thee, Conscience so me Christ help!
How thou lessonest the people the learned and unlearned.'

'I am glad of that charge' said the man then,
And rode right to Reason rehearsed in his ear,
And said as the king bade and soon took his leave.

'I shall array me to ride,' quoth Reason 'rest thee awhile;'
And called Cato his knave courteous of speech,
And also Tom-true-tongue- tell-me-no-tales-
Nor-lies-for-to-laugh-at- for-I-loved-them-never;
'And set saddle upon Suffer- till-I-see-my-time,
And girdle it well with Wise-Word's girths,
Hang on the heavy bridle to hold his head low,
For he will neigh more than once ere that he be there.'

Then Conscience on his courser fareth forth fast
And Reason with him rode rehearsing together
What masteries Meed maketh on this earth.

One Warren Wisdom and Witty his fellow
Followed them fast they had business to do,
In Exchequer and at Chancery to be discharged:
And rode fast, for Reason should advise them best
For to save them, for silver from shame and from harm.

And Conscience knew them well they loved covetousness,
And bade Reason ride fast and reck of them neither.

'There are wiles in their words and with Meed they dwell;
Where wrath is and wrangling there win they silver;
But where loyalty and love is they will not come near.

Contritia & in felicitas in viis eorum, etc.

They will give naught for God not even one goose wing,
Non est timor Dei ante oculos eorum.

For, God knows, they would do more for a dozen chickens
Or as many capons or for a sack of oats,
Than for the love of our Lord or all his loyal saints.
Therefore, Reason, let those rich ones ride by themselves,
For Conscience knows them not nor does Christ, as I think.
And then Reason rode fast on the right highway,
As Conscience advised till they came to the king.

Courteously the king then came to meet Reason,
And between himself and his son set him on a bench,
And they talked most wisely a great while together.

Then came Peace into parliament and put forth a bill—
How Wrong against his will had his wife taken,
How he had ravished Rose Reginald's love,
And Margaret her maidenhood not minding her kicks.
Both my poultry and pigs his purveyors fetch;
I dare not for fear of him fight or complain.
He borrowed my bay horse and brought him home never,
Nor no farthing there for for aught I could plead.
He maintaineth his men to murder my menials,
Fighteth in my markets and forestalleth my fairs,
Breaketh up my barn door beareth off my wheat,
And for ten quarters of oats tenders a tally;
He beats me also and lies with my maid—
I am not brave enough to give him a look.
The king knew he said sooth for Conscience him told
Wrong was a wicked wretch who wrought much sorrow.

Wrong was afeared then and Wisdom he sought
To make peace with his pence and proffered him many,
And said: 'Had I the king's love little would I reck,
Though Peace and his power complained for ever.'

Then went Wisdom and Sir Warren the witty,
For that Wrong had wrought so wicked a deed,
And warned Wrong then with this wise tale:
'Whoso worketh wilfully wrath maketh oft;
I say it of thyself thou shalt it well find.
Except Meed it mend thy mischief is certain,
For both thy life and thy land lie in his grace.'

Then wooed Wrong Wisdom full hard
To make peace with his pence paid out on the sly.

Wisdom and Wit then went they together
And took Meed along with them mercy to win.

Peace put forth his head and his bloody pate:
'Without guilt, God knoweth got I this harm;
Conscience and the Commons know I speak sooth.'

But Wisdom and Wit worked away fast
To come over the king with money, if they might.

The king swore, by Christ and by his crown both,
That Wrong for his works should woe endure,
And commanded a constable to cast him in irons,
'And let him not in seven years see his feet once.'

'God knows,' quoth Wisdom 'that were not the best;
If he make amends let Surety have him
And be bail for his baseness and buy his well-being,
So amend what is misdome and evermore be better.'

Wit accorded therewith and said the same:
'Better it is that good evil down bring,
Than evil be beaten and good never the better.'

Then began Meed to moan and mercy besought.
And proffered Peace a present all of pure gold.
'Have this, man, of me,' quoth she 'to amend thy scathe,
For I will wager for Wrong he will do so no more.'

Piteously Peace then prayed to the king
To have mercy on that man that misdid him so oft;
'For he hath pledged me well as Wisdom him taught,
And I forgive him that guilt with a good will,
So that the king assent I can say no better,
For Meed hath made me amends and I may no more ask.'

'Nay,' quoth the king then 'so me Christ help!
Wrong mendeth not so away first will I know more;
For if let off so lightly laugh loud he would,
And afterwards bolder be to beat my subjects.
Unless Reason have ruth on him he shall rest in my stocks,
And that as long as he liveth except Lowliness him bail.'

Some men prompted Reason to have pity on that wretch,
And counselled the king and Conscience after;
And that Meed might be surety Reason besought.

'Tell me not,' quoth Reason 'pity to have,
Till lords and ladies all love truth
And hate all wickedness to hear it or speak it;
Till Pernel puts her pretty things away in her drawer;

PASSUS IV]

THE VISION

And cherishing of children be by chastening with rods;
 And holiness of rascals be held not a marvel;
 Till covetousness of clerks the poor clothes and feeds;
 And roaming religious sing *Recordare*¹ in cloister,
 As Saint Benet them bade Bernard and Francis;
 And till preachers' preaching be proved on themselves;
 And till the king's counsel be common profit;
 Till bishops' bay mares buy shelter for beggars,
 Their hawks and their hounds help for poor religious.

'And till Saint James be sought where the poor sick be,
 So none go to Galicia but to stay there for ever;
 And all the Rome-runners to robbers beyond
 Bear no silver over sea that shows the king's sign,
 Neither graven nor ungraven golden nor silver,
 Upon forfeiture of that fee whoso finds him at Dover,
 Except he be merchant or his man or messenger with letters,
 Provisor or priest or penitent for his sins.
 And yet,' quoth Reason, 'by the Rood I shall no ruth have
 While Meed hath the mastery in this moot-hall.
 But I may shew examples as I see otherwiles.
 I say for myself,' quoth he 'and it so were
 That I were king with a crown to care for a realm,
 Should never wrong in this world that I might know,
 Be unpunished in my power on peril of my soul!
 Nor get my grace for gifts so me God save!
 Nor for no Meed have mercy except she be meek.

'For *nullum malum* the men met with *impunitatem*
 And bade *nullum bonum* be *irremuneratum*.

'Let your confessor, sir king construe this without gloss;
 And if ye put it to test I pledge both my ears
 That Law shall turn labourer and spread dung afield,
 And Love lead thy land as thou likest best!'

Clerks that were confessors coupled them together
 All to construe this clause and for the king's profit,
 Nor for comfort of the commons nor for the king's soul.

For I saw Meed in the moot-hall on men of law wink,
 And they laughing leaned to her and many left Reason.

Warren Wisdom winked upon Meed
 And said: 'Madam, I am your man whatever my mouth say;
 I fall in with florins,' quoth that fellow 'and then my speech fails.'

¹ See page 203.

All the righteous recorded that Reason told truth,
Wit accorded therewith and commended his words,
And most people in the hall and many of the great
Held Meekness the master and Meed a vile shrew.

Love held her lightly and Loyalty still less,
And said it so loudly that all the hall heard:
'Whoso wants her for wife for the wealth of her goods,
If he be not a cuckold then cut off my nose.'

Meed mourned then and made heavy cheer,
For the commons in that court called her an whore.
But a sizer and a summoner pursued her fast,
And a sheriff's clerk cursed all the rout,
'For often have I,' quoth he 'helped you at bar
And yet gave ye me never the worth of a rush.'

The king called Conscience and afterwards Reason
And recorded that Reason had rightfully shown;
And moodily upon Meed with might the king looked,
Waxed wroth with Law Meed almost had fouled it,
And said: 'Through your law I lose many escheats;
Meed over-mastereth Law and Truth mightily hinders.
Reason shall reckon with you if I reign any while,
And judge you, by this day as you have deserved.
Meed shall not bail you by Mary of heaven!
I will have loyalty in law and stop all your jangling,
And as most folk witness well Wrong shall be sentenced.'

Quoth Conscience to the king 'If the commons assent not
'Tis full hard, by mine head thereto to bring it,
All of your liege-men to lead thus aright.'

'By him racked on the wood' quoth Reason to the king,
'If I rule not your realm rend out my ribs!
If ye order Obedience to be on my side.'

'And I assent,' saith the king 'by Saint Mary my lady!
When my council comes of clerks and of earls.
But readily, Reason thou shalt not ride from me,
For as long as I live I will not let thee go.'

'I am ready,' quoth Reason 'to rest with you ever;
If Conscience will be of our council I care for no better.
'And I grant,' quoth the king 'God forbid that it fail!
As long as our life lasteth live we together.'

PASSUS V

THE king and his knights to the church went
To hear matins of the day and the Mass after.
Then waked I of my winking and was woeful withal
That I had not slept sounder and so seen more.
But ere I fared a furlong faintness me seized,
I might not go further a foot for want of my sleep;
And sat softly adown and said my Creed
And as I babbled on my beads they brought me asleep.
And then saw I much more than I before told:
For I saw the field full of folk that I before spoke of,
And how Reason got ready to preach to the realm,
And with a cross before the king began thus to teach.

He proved that these pestilences¹ were purely for sin,
And the south-west wind on Saturday at even
Was plainly for pure pride and for no point else.
Pear-trees and plum-trees were puffed to the earth
For example, ye men that ye should do better.
Beeches and broad oaks were blown to the ground,
Turned upwards their tails in token of dread
That deadly sin at doomsday shall undo them all.

Of this matter I might mumble full long,
But I will say as I saw so God me help!
How plainly before the people Reason began to preach.

He bade Waster go work at what he best could
And win back his wasting with some manner of craft.

And prayed Pernel put off her costly array
And keep it in her box for money at her need.

Tow Stowe he taught to take two staves
And from women's punishment² bring Phyllis home.

He warned Wat his wife was to blame,
That her hat was worth half a mark his hood cost not a groat.
And bade Batt cut down a bough or even two
And beat Betty therewith unless she should work.
And then he charged chapmen to chasten their children:

¹ See page 203.

² See page 203.

'Let no wish for wealth spoil them while they be young,
Nor for power of the pestilence please them out of reason.

My sire said so to me and so did my dame,
That the more loved the child the more teaching it needs,
And Solomon said the same that Wisdom made,

Qui parcit virgae, odit filium.

The English of this Latin is whoso will it know,
Whoso spareth the sprig spoileth the children.'

And then he prayed prelates and priests together,
'What ye preach to the people prove it on yourselves
And do it in deeds it shall draw you to good;
If ye live as ye teach us we'll believe you the better.'

And then he counselled religious their rule to uphold,
'Lest the king and his council your commons curtail
And be stewards of your steads till ye be better ruled.'

Then he counselled the king the commons to love,
'They're thy treasure in treason and help at thy need.'
And then he prayed the pope to pity Holy Church,
And ere he give any grace to govern first himself.

'And ye that have laws to guard let truth be your desire
More than gold or other gifts if ye will God please;
For whoso contrarieth truth he telleth in the gospel,
That God knoweth him not nor doth no saint in Heaven:

Amen dico vobis, nescio vos.

'And ye that seek Saint James and the Saints of Rome,
Seek ye Saint Truth for he may save you all,
Qui cum Patre & Filio may fair them befall
That list to my sermon' And thus said Reason.
Then ran Repentance and rehearsed his theme
And made Will to weep water with his eyes.

SUPERBIA

Pernel Proud-heart leaned her to the earth
And lay long ere she looked and 'Lord, mercy!' cried,
And vowed to him that us all made
She should unsew her shift and wear a hairshirt
To enfeeble her flesh that fierce was to sin.
'Shall never high heart have me but hold myself lowly
And suffer myself slighted and so did I never.
But now will I be meek and mercy beseech,
For all this I have hated in mine heart.'

LUXURIA

Then Lecher said: 'Alas!' and on our Lady he cried,
To make mercy for his misdeeds between God and his soul,
If he should every Saturday for seven year thereafter
Drink but with the duck and dine only once.

INVIDIA

Envy with heavy heart asked them for shrift,
And sadly *mea culpa* began to repeat.
He was pale as a stone in a palsy he seemed,
And clothed in coarse cloth which I could not describe;
In a kilt and a coat and a knife by his side;
Of a friar's frock were the fore-sleeves.
Like a leek that had lain too long in the sun,
So looked he with lean cheeks lowering foully.

His body bursting with wrath so that he bit his lips,
And went wringing with his fists to wreak himself he thought
With works or with words when he saw his time.
Each sentence he said was of an adder's tongue,
Chiding and challenge was his chief livelihood
With backbiting and blackguarding and bearing false witness
This was all his courtesy wherever he showed him.

'I'd be shriven,' quoth this wretch 'and I for shame dare not;
I'd be gladder, by God that Gib had mischance
Than if I'd this week won weight of Essex cheese.
I've a neighbour nigh me whom I've annoyed oft,
And lied on him to lords to make him lose his silver,
And made his friends be his foes through my false tongue;
His grace and his good haps grieve me full sore.
Between family and family I make debate oft,
That both life and limb is lost through my speech.
And when I meet him in market that I most hate,
I hail him heartily as I his friend were;
For he is braver than I and I dare do no other;
But had I mastery and might God wot my will!

'And when I come to the church and should kneel to the rood
And pray for the people as the priest teacheth,
For pilgrims and palmers and for all people after,
Then I cry on my knees that Christ give them sorrow
Who bare away my bowl and my ragged sheet.

'Away from the altar then turn I mine eyes,
 And behold how Helen hath a new coat:
 I wish then it were mine and all the webb as well.
 At men's losses I laugh that liketh mine heart.
 For their winnings I weep and wail all the time;
 Deem that they do ill where I dō far worse;
 Whoso chides me therefore I hate him deadly after.
 I would that each wight were mine own knave,
 For whoso hath more than I angereth me sore.
 And thus I live loveless like a lousy dog,
 So that my body bursts for bitterness of my gall.
 I might not eat many years as a man ought,
 For envy and ill will is bad to digest.
 Can no sugar nor sweet thing assuage my swelling,
 Nor no *diapenidion*¹ drive it from mine heart,
 Nor neither shrift nor sham if my maw be not scraped?'

'Yes, readily,' quoth Repentance and ruled him from the best.
 'Sorrow for sins is salvation of souls.'

'I am sorry,' quoth the man 'I am but seldom other,
 And that maketh me thus meagre for I cannot revenge.
 Among burgesses have I been dwelling at London,
 And got Backbiting by a broker to blame men's wares.
 When one sold and I not then was I ready
 To lie and lower on my neighbour and slander his goods.
 I will amend this if I may by the Almighty's might.'

IRA

Now awaketh Wrath with two white eyes
 And snivelling at the nose and his neck hanging.
 'I am Wrath,' quoth he 'I was some time a friar
 And the convent's gardener for to graft shoots.
 On limiters and lectors² lyings I grafted,
 Till they bare leaves of lowly speech the lords to please;
 And then they blossomed abroad in bowers to hear shrifts.
 And now is fallen a fruit that folk much prefer
 To show their sins to them than be shriven by their parsons.'

'And now parsons have perceived that they must share with friars,
 The beneficed ones preach and the friars defame;
 The friars find them at fault as folk bear witness,

¹ See page 203.² See page 203.

That when they preach to the people in any place about
I, Wrath, walk with them and guide them from my looks.
Thus they speak of the spirit but either despiseth other
Till they be both beggars and by my ministering live,
Or else all are rich and ride horses about.
I, Wrath, rest never but that I must follow
This wicked folk for such is my grace.

'I have an aunt a nun and an abbess as well;
Her were liefer swoon or die than suffer pain.

'I've been cook in her kitchen in the convent served
Many months with them and with monks as well.
I was prioresses' pottager and for other poor ladies,
And made them pottage of prattling that Dame Joan was a bastard;
Dame Clarice a knight's daughter and a cuckold her sire;
And Dame Pernel a priest's wench prioress to be never,
For she childed in cherry-time as the whole chapter knew.

'Of wicked words, I, Wrath their salads made,
Till "Thou liest!" and "Thou liest!" leaped out at once
And either hit other under the cheek;
Had they had knives, by Christ each had killed other.

'Saint Gregory was a good pope and had good forewit,
That no prioress should be priest¹ so he ordained.
They had else incurred infamy the very first day
That they took up their office they're so ill to keep counsel.

'Among monks I might be but oft times I shun them,
For there be many strict ones mine affairs to espy,
Both prior and subprior and our *pater abbas*.

If I tell any tales they counsel together
And make me fast Fridays on bread and water;
I'm charged in the chapter-house as if I a child were
And beaten on my backside no breeches between,
So have I no liking with those men to dwell.
I eat there stale stockfish and feeble ale drink.

At other time, when wine cometh when I drink wine at eve
I have a flux of a foul mouth a good five days after.
All the wickedness I know of by any of our brethren,
I tell it in the cloister till the whole convent knows.'

'Now repent ye,' quoth Repentance 'and rehearse thou never
Counsel that thou knowest by favour or by right.
And drink not over delicately nor too deep neither,

¹ See page 203.

Lest thy will because thereof to wrath might be turned.
Esto sobrius, he said and absolved me after
 And bade me wish to weep my wickedness to amend.

AVARICIA

And then came Covetousness I can him not describe,
 So hungry and hollow Sir Harvey him looked.
 He was beetle-browed and blubber-lipped too,
 With two bleared eyes as a blind hog;
 And as a leather purse lolled his cheeks
 Yet lower than his chin trembling with age;
 And as a bondman's with bacon his beard was bedraggled.
 With an hood on his head a lousy hat above,
 And in a tawny tabard of twelve winters' age,
 All tattered and dirty and full of lice creeping—
 But if a louse could not have leaped with the best
 She could not have walked there so threadbare the stuff.

'I have been covetous,' quoth this caitiff 'I acknowledge it here.
 For some time I served Sim-at-the-stile
 And was his prentice pledged his profit to serve.
 First I learned to lie for a leaf or two;
 Wickedly to weigh was my first lesson.
 To Weyhill and Winchester I went to the fair,
 With many manner of merchandise as my master me bade;
 And had not grace of Guile gone in with my wares
 They had been unsold this seven years so help me God!

'Then tarried I amongst drapers my grammar to learn;
 To draw the selvedge along the longer it seemed;
 Among the rich ranged cloths I rendered a lesson,
 To pierce them with a pack-needle and plait them together,
 Put them in a press and pin them therein
 Till ten yards or twelve had tolled out to thirteen.

'My wife was a weaver and woollen cloth made.
 She spoke to the spinsters to spin it all out,
 But the pound that she paid by poised a quartern more
 Than did mine own balance whoso weighed true.

'I bought her barley malt she brewed it to sell.
 Penny-ale and pudding-ale she poured together
 For labourers and for low folk that was kept by itself.

'The best ale lay in my bower or in my bedchamber,

And whoso tasted thereof bought it thereafter
A gallon for a groat no less, God knows:
And 'twas measure in cupfuls this craft my wife used.
Rose the Retailer was her right name;
She hath holden huckstering all through her lifetime.

'But I swear now, may I thrive! that sin will I stop,
And never wickedly weigh nor wicked chaffer use,
But wend to Walsingham and my wife also
And pray the Rood of Bromholm¹ bring me out of debt.'

'Repentest thou ever,' quoth Repentance 'or restitution madest?'

'Yes, once I was harboured with an heap of chapmen;
I rose when they were at rest and rifled their bags.'

'That was no restitution but a robber's theft.
Thou haddest be better worthy to be hanged there for
Than for all that that thou hast here showed.'

'I weened rifling were restitution for I've not learned in books
And I know no French, i'faith but of furthest end of Norfolk.'

'Usedest thou every usury in all thy life-time?'

'Nay, soothly,' he said 'save in my youth.

I learned a lesson among Jews and Lombards,
To weigh pence with a weight and pare down the heaviest;
And lend it for love of the Cross for a pledge, to be lost;
Such deeds I did write lest he due day miss.
I have more money through arrears than through *miseretur et commodat*.
I have lent lords and ladies my goods,
And been their broker after and bought it myself.
Exchanges and contracts with much chaffer I deal;
Lend to folk that will lose of every noble a part.
And with Lombard's letters I lend gold to Rome,
Here took it by tally and told it there less.'

'Lentest ever to lords for love of protection?'

'Yea, I have lent to lords who loved me never after,
And have made many a knight both mercer and draper
That paid for his prenticehood not a pair of gloves even.'

'Hast thou pity on poor men that must needs borrow?'

'I have as much pity of poor men as hath pedlar of cats
He would kill if he could for the sake of their skins.'

'Art thou generous to thy neighbours with thy meat and drink?'

'I am holden as kind as a hound in the kitchen;
Among my neighbours especially I have such a name.'

¹ See page 203.

'Now God never grant thee but thou soon repent,
 His grace on this ground thy goods well to bestow,
 Nor thine heirs after thee to have joy of thy winnings,
 Nor executors spend well the silver thou leavest;
 That which by wrong was won by wicked men to be spent.
 For were I friar of that house where is good faith and charity,
 I'd not clothe us with thy cash nor our church amend,
 Nor have for our pittance a penn'orth of thine
 For the best book in our house though bright gold were leaves,
 If I knew indeed thou wert such as thou tellest,
 Or if I could know it in any sure way.

Servus es alterius cum fercula pinguia quaeris,

Pane tuo potius vescere, liber eris.

'Thou art an unkindly creature I cannot absolve thee
 Till thou make restitution reckon up with them all;
 And till Reason enrol in the register of Heaven
 That thou hast made each man good I may not absolve thee—

Non dimittitur peccatum, donec restituatur oblatum, etc.

'For all that have aught of thy goods so God have my truth!
 Will be held at the high Day of Doom to help thee to restore.
 And whoso believeth not this let him look in the Psalter,
 In *Miserere mei Deus* whether I speak truth;

Ecce enim veritatem dilexisti, etc.

'Shall never workman in this world thrive with what thou winnest;
Cum sancto sanctus eris construe me that in English.'

Then drooped the scamp in despair and would have himself hanged,
 Had not Repentance the rather recomforted him in this manner,
 'Have mercy in thy mind and with thy mouth ask it,
 For God his mercy is more than all his other works;

Misericordia ejus super omnia opera ejus, etc.

'And all the wickedness in this world that man might work or think
 Is no more to the mercy of God than a live coal in the sea;

Omnis iniquitas quantum ad misericordiam Dei, est quasi scintilla in medio maris.

'Therefore have mercy in mind and in merchandise, trust it:
 For thou hast no good ground to get thee a cake with,
 Unless it were with thy tongue or else with thy two hands.
 For the goods thou hast gotten began all with falsehood,
 And whilst thou livest therewith thou payest not, but borrowest.
 And if thou know never to which nor to whom to restore,
 Bear it to the bishop and bid him of his grace

Bestow it himself as is best for thy soul.
For for thee shall be answer at the high Day of Doom;
For thee and many more shall that man give a reckoning.
What he taught you in Lent believe thou none other,
What he gave of our Lord's goods to lead you from sin.'

GULA

Now beginneth Glutton for to go to shrift
And carries him to kirk-ward his fault there to show.
But Betty the brewster bade him good-morrow
And asked of him with that whitherward he would.
'To holy church,' quoth he 'for to hear Mass,
And after will be shriven and then sin no more.'
'Gossip, I've good ale,' quoth she 'Glutton, wilt thou try it?'
'Hast thou aught in thy bag? Any hot spices?'
'I have pepper and peony and a pound too of garlic,
And a farthing's worth of fennel-seed for fasting days.'
Then goeth Glutton in and great oaths come after.
Cis the shoe-seller sat on the bench,
Wat the game-keeper and his wife too,
Tim the tinker and two of his prentices,
Hick the horsedealer and Hugh the needle-seller,
Clarice of Cock lane and the clerk of the church,
Davy the ditcher and a dozen other;
Sir Piers the priest and Pernel of Flanders,
A fiddler, a rat-catcher the street sweeper of Cheapside,
A roper, a riding-man and Rose the dish-seller,
Godfrey of Garlickhithe and Griffith the Welshman,
And old-clothesmen a heap early in the morning
Give Glutton with glad cheer good ale for himself.
Clement the cobbler cast off his cloak
And named it for sale at the 'new fair' game.¹
Hick the horse dealer heaved his hood after
And bade Bart the butcher be on his side.
There were chapmen chosen the goods to appraise;
Whoso hath the hood should have amends for the cloak.
Two rose up quickly and whispered together
And priced these pennyworths apart by themselves.
They could not in their conscience agree on a value,

¹ See page 203.

Till Robin the roper arose for the truth
And named himself umpire to avoid a debate
And to settle this business betwixt them three.

Hickey the hostler he had the cloak,
In covenant that Clement should the cup fill
And have Hick hostler's hood and hold himself served;
And whoso sooner repented should arise after
And give to Sir Glutton a gallon of ale.

There was laughing and lowering and 'Let go the cup!'
They sat so till evensong singing now and then,
Till Glutton had gulped down a gallon and a gill.
His guts 'gan to grumble like two greedy sows;
He pissed a pot-full in a paternoster-while;
And blew with the bugle at his backbone's end,
That all hearing that horn held their nose after
And wished it were stopped up with a wisp of furze.

He could neither step nor stand before he had his staff;
Then began he to go like a gleeman's bitch,
Sometimes aside sometimes astern
As whoso layeth lines for to snare fowl.

And when he drew to the door then dimmed his eyes;
He stumbled on threshold and fell to the earth.
Clement the cobbler caught him by the middle
For to lift him aloft and laid him on his knees;
Glutton was a great lout and lumpish to lift
And coughed up a caudle in Clement's lap:
No hound is so hungry in Hertfordshire
Dare lap up those leavings so unlovely they smelt.

With all the woe of this world his wife and his wench
Bare him home to his bed and brought him therein.
And after all his excess he had such a head
He slept Saturday and Sunday till the sun went to rest.
Then waked he of his winking and wiped his eyes;
The first word that he said was: 'Where is the bowl?'
His wife began to reproach him for how wickedly he lived,
And Repentance right so rebuked him that time:
'As thou with words and works hast wrought evil in thy life,'
Shrive thee and be shamed therefore and show it with thy mouth.'

'I, Glutton,' quoth the wretch 'confess me guilty,
That I have trespassed with my tongue I can not tell how oft:
Sworn "by God's soul" and "so help me, God and his saints,"

Where there was no need over nine hundred times.
 And surfeited me at supper and sometimes at noon,
 That I, Glutton, threw it up ere I'd gone a mile
 And spilt what might be spared and spent on some hungry one.
 Over-delicately on fasting-days drunken and eaten,
 And sometimes sat so long I slept and ate together.
 For love of tales dined I in taverns to drink more,
 And hurried to meat ere noon when fasting-days were.'
 'This shewing of shrift,' quoth Repentance 'shall merit to thee.'
 Began Glutton to cry and great dole to make
 For his evil life that he had so lived;
 And vowed to fast 'for hunger as for thirst
 Shall never fish on Friday digest in my womb,
 Till Abstinence mine aunt hath given me leave;
 And yet have I hated her all my life long.'

ACCIDIA

Then came Sloth all beslobbered with two slimy eyes.
 'I must sit,' said the fellow 'or else should I nap.
 I cannot stand nor stoop nor without a stool kneel.
 But were I put to bed unless my tail made me,
 Should no ringing make me rise ere I were ripe to dine.'
 He began *Benedicite* ¹ with a belch and knocked on his breast
 And stretched and snored and slumbered at last.
 'Awake, wretch!' quoth Repentance 'and run thee to shrift.'
 'Should I die on this day I'd not trouble to look.
 I know not *Paternoster* as the priest it singeth,
 But I know rhymes of Robin Hood and Earl Randolph of Chester,
 But of our Lord or our Lady not the least ever made.
 I have made forty vows and forgot them at morning;
 I performed never penance as the priest me bade,
 Nor right sorry for my sins yet was I never.
 If I pray any prayers except it be in wrath,
 What I tell with my tongue is two miles from mine heart.
 I am occupied each day holidays and other,
 With idle tales in the alehouse and sometimes in churches.
 God's pain and his passion seldom think I thereon.
 I visited never feeble men nor fettered folk in jail;
 I had liefer hear an harlotry or cobbler's summer games,

¹ See page 203.

Or lyings to laugh at and belying my neighbour,
 Than all that ever Mark made Matthew, John and Luke.
 And vigils and fasting days all these I let pass,
 And lie abed in Lent my wench in my arms,
 Till matins and Mass be done then I go to the friars;
 Come I to *Ite, missa est* I hold myself served.
 I'm not shriven for a long time unless sickness make me,
 Not twice in two years and then confession is a guess.

'I have been priest and a parson passing thirty winters,
 Yet can I not sing *sol-fa* nor read the saints' lives;
 But I can find in a field or a furrow an hare,
 Better than in *Beatus vir* or *Beati omnes*
 Construe one clause well and teach my parishioners.
 I can hold love-days¹ and hear a reeve's reckoning,
 But in the canon or decretals I can not read a line.
 If I buy on tick unless it be tallied
 I forget it as soon and if men me it ask,
 Six times or seven I deny it with oaths,
 And thus trouble I true men ten hundred times.

'And my servants' salary a long time is behind;
 Rueful is the reckoning when we render account.
 So with wicked will and wrath my workmer I pay.

'If man doth me a benefit or helpeth me at need,
 I am unkind to his courtesy and can not understand it;
 For I have, and have had something of a hawk's manner:
 I am not lured with love unless there lie aught under the thumb.

'Kindness my fellow Christians accorded me formerly,
 Sixty times I, Sloth have forgot it since.
 In speech, and in sparing speech I waste many a time
 Both flesh and fish and much other victual;
 Both bread and ale butter, milk and cheese,
 I spoiled in my service so it might serve no man.

'I ran about in my youth nor set me to learn,
 And ever since have been beggared for my foul sloth:

Heu mihi, quod sterilem vitam duxi juvenilem.'

'Repentest thou not?' quoth Repentance and right with that he
 swooned,

Till *Vigilate* the vigilant fetched water from his eyes
 And flooded his face and fast on him cried
 And said, 'Beware of Despair who would thee betray.

¹ See page 203.

"I am sorry for my sins," say so to thyself,
 Beat thyself on the breast and beseech of him grace:
 For is no guilt there so great that his goodness is not more.'

Then sat Sloth up and crossed himself
 And made a vow to God 'gainst his foul sloth:
 'Shall no Sunday be for seven year unless sickness me stop,
 That I go not before dawn to the dear church
 And matins hear and Mass as though I were a monk.
 No ale after meat shall hold me thence
 Till evensong I've heard I vow it to the rood.
 Moreover will I pay back if I it have,
 All I've wickedly won since I had wit.

'Though I lack livelihood stop will I not
 Till each man shall have his ere that I go hence;
 And with the residue and remnant by the Rood of Chester!
 I shall seek Truth first before I see Rome.'

Robert the Robber on *Reddite* looked;
 He'd naught to pay with and wept full sore.
 But yet the sinful wretch said to himself,
 'Christ, that on Calvary upon the cross died,
 When Dismas ¹ my brother besought you of grace,
 Thou haddest mercy on that man for *memento's* sake
 Have pity on this robber that cannot repay
 And may never hope to win with work what I owe.
 But for thy much mercy mitigation I beseech;
 Damn me not at doomsday for that I did ill.'

What fell to this felon I can not fairly show;
 Well I wot he wept water fast with both eyes,
 And acknowledged his guilt right soon after to Christ,
 That his pike of penitence he should polish anew
 And use it on pilgrimage all his life-time,
 For he had lain with *Latro* Lucifer's aunt.

Then had Repentance ruth and bade them all kneel:
 'For I shall beseech for all sinners our Saviour of grace
 To amend us of misdeeds and do mercy to all.

'Now God,' quoth he, 'that of thy goodness didst the world make
 And of naught madest aught and man most like to thyself,
 And since suffered him to sin a sickness to us all,
 Yet for the best—as I hold whatever the Book telleth,
O felix culpa! O necessarium peccatum Adae! etc.

¹ See page 203.

'For through that sin thy son sent was to this earth,
And became man of a maid mankind to save,
And thyself with thy son was made like to us sinners:

*Faciamus hominen ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram;
Et alibi:*

Qui manet in caritate, in Dea manet, & Deus in eo.

'And then with thy Son's self in our suit¹ died
On Good Friday for man's sake at full time of day,
Where thyself nor thy Son no sorrow felt in death,
But in ourselves was the sorrow and thy Son it led—

Captivam duxit captivitatem.

'The sun thereof for sorrow lost sight for a time
About midday, when most light is the meal time of saints,
When thou didst feed with thy fresh blood our forefathers in darkness:

Populus qui ambulabat in tenebris, vidit lucem magnam;

Through the light that leaped from thee Lucifer was blinded,
And all thy Blessed blown into Paradise bliss.

The third day after thou goest in our guise;
A sinful Mary saw thee before Saint Mary thy mother,
And all to solace the sinful thou sufferedest it so:

Non veni vocare justos, sed peccatores ad poenitentiam.

'And all that Mark hath written Matthew, John and Luke,
Of thy doughtiest deeds were done beneath our arms:

Verbum caro factum est, et habitavit in nobis.

'And by so much, meseemeth the more surely we may
Pray and beseech if it be thy will,
That art our father and brother to be merciful to us;
And to have pity on those ribalds that repent them here sore
That they wrathed thee in this world in word, thought or deeds.'

Then grasped Hope an horn of *Deus, tu conversus vivificabis nos,*
And blew it with *Beati quorum remissae sunt iniquitates,*
So that all saints in Heaven sang loudly together:

Homines & jumenta salvabis, quemadmodum multiplicasti misericordiam tuam, Deus, etc.

A thousand men then came thronging together,
Who cried upward to Christ and to his clean Mother
To have grace to go with them Truth for to seek.

But there was no wight so wise that he knew the way thither
But blundered like beasts over banks and on hills
A long time, till 'twas late that they a man met

¹ See page 203.

Apparelled as a Paynim in a pilgrim's wise.
He bare a staff bound with a broad strip
In bindweed wise wound about.
A bowl and a bag he bare by his side;
An hundred ampullas on his hat set,
Signs of Sinai and shells of Galicia,
Many a cross on his cloak keys also of Rome
And the vernicle in front so that men should know
And see by his signs what shrines he had sought.¹

This folk asked him first from whence he did come.

'From Sinai,' he said 'and from our Lord's sepulchre;
Bethlehem and Babylon I have been in both;
In Armenia, in Alexandria and many other places.
Ye may see by my signs that sit on my hat
That I've walked full wide in wet and in dry,
And have sought good saints for my soul's health.'

'Knowest thou aught of a saint that men call Truth?
Could'st thou show us the way where that wight dwelleth?'

'Nay, so help me God!' said the man then,
'I saw never palmer with pike nor with scrip
Ask after him, till now in this place.'

'Peter!' quoth a plowman and put forth his head,
'I know him as well as a clerk doth his books.
Conscience and Mother-Wit made known his place
And made me swear surely to serve him for ever
Both in sowing and setting so long as I work.
I have been his follower all these fifty winters,
Both sown his seed and driven his beasts,
And watched over his profit within and without.
I dike and I delve and do what Truth biddeth:
Sometimes I sow and sometimes I thresh;
In tailor's and tinker's craft what Truth can devise;
I weave and I wind and do what Truth biddeth:
For though I say it myself I serve him to his pleasure;
I have good hire of him and oftentimes more.
He is the readiest payer that a poor man knoweth;
He withholds not his hire from his servants at even.
He is lowly as a lamb and lovely of speech,
And if ye are wishful to know where that he dwelleth,
I shall show you surely the way to his place.'

¹ See page 203.

'Yea, dear Piers,' quoth these pilgrims and proffered him hire
For to wend with them to Truth's dwelling-place.

'Nay, by my soul's health!' quoth Piers and began for to swear,
'I would not take a farthing for Saint Thomas's shrine!
Truth would love me the less a long time thereafter!

'But if ye will to wend well this is the way thither,
That I shall say to you and set you in the path.
Ye must go through Meekness both men and their wives,
Till ye come into Conscience let Christ know the truth
That ye love our lord God the best of all things;
And then your neighbours next in no wise use
Otherwise than thou wouldest be wrought to thyself.

'And so bend round by a brook Be-humble-of-speech,
Till ye find a ford called Honour-your-fathers:

Honora patrem et matrem, etc.

Wade in that water and wash you well there,
And you shall leap the lighter all your lifetime.
And so shalt thou see Swear-not- but-it-be-for-need-
Especially-not-idly- by-God-Almighty's-name.

'Then shalt thou come by a croft but come not therein;
That croft is called Covet-not- men's-cattle-nor-their-wives-
Nor-none-of-their-servants- that-might-them-annoy.
Look ye break no boughs there unless it be your own.

'Two stocks there standeth but stay ye not there;
They're called Steal-not and Slay-not strike forth by both
And leave them on thy left hand and look not thereafter
But hold well thine holiday holy till even.

'Then shalt thou turn at a tump Bear-no-false-witness
He is fenced with florins and other fees many;
Look that thou pluck no plant there for peril of thy soul;

'Then shall ye see Say-sooth- as-it-is-to-be-done-
And-in-no-manner-else- for-any-man's-bidding.

'Then shalt thou come to a court as clear as the sun;
The moat is of Mercy the manor about,
And its walls are of Wit to hold the Will out,
Crenellated with Christendom mankind to save,
Buttressed with Believe-so- or-thou-beest-not-saved.
And all the houses are covered the halls and the chambers,
With no lead but with Love and Low-speech-of-brethren.
The bridge is of Pray-well- the-better-mayest-thou-speed;
Each pillar is of Penance and of Prayers to saints;

Of alms-deeds are the hooks whereon the gates hang.

'Grace is the gateward a good man forsooth;

His man is Amend-you many men him know:

Tell him this token that Truth may know sooth:

"I performed the penance the priest me enjoined,

And full sorry for my sins and so shall be ever

When I think thereon though I were a pope."

'Bid Amend-you full meekly his master to ask

To draw up the wicket that the woman shut

When Adam and Eve ate apples unroasted:

Per Evam cunctis clausa est, & per Mariam virginem iterum patefacta est.

For he hath key and catch though the king sleep.

'And if Grace grant thee to go in this wise,

Thou shalt see in thyself Truth sit in thine heart

In a chain of charity as thou a child were

To suffer him and say naught against thy Sire's will.

'But beware then of Wrath-thee that is a wicked wretch;

He hath envy for him that in thine heart sitteth,

And putteth forth Pride for praise of thyself.

Boldness of thy benefactions then maketh thee blind

And thou'lt be driven out as dew and the door closed,

Keyed and clamped up to keep thee without;

And hundred winters haply ere ever thou enter.

So thus might thou lose his love by uplifting thyself,

And never enter haply again unless thou have grace.

'But there are seven sisters that ever serve Truth

And are porters of the posterns that belong to the place;

One is called Abstinence and Humility another;

Charity and Chastity be his chief maidens;

Patience and Peace much people they help;

The lady Largesse hath let in full many:

She hath helped thousands out from the Devil's pinfeld.

He who is kin to this seven so help me God!

He is wondrously welcome and fairly received;

And unless ye be kin to some of these seven,

'Tis full hard, by my head! for any of you all

To get in at any gate unless grace be given.'

'Now, by Christ!' quoth a cutpurse 'I have no kin here!'

'Nor I,' quoth an apeward 'for aught that I know!'

'God knows,' quoth a waferer¹ 'knew I this for sooth

¹ See page 204.

I'd go no foot further for any friar's preaching.'

'Yes,' quoth Piers the Plowman and pushed them towards good,

'Mercy is a maiden there hath might over all;

She is cousin to all sinners and her Son also;

Through help of them two (hope not in none other)

Thou might get grace there if thou go betimes.'

'By Saint Paul,' quoth a pardoner 'perchance I'm not known there.

I'll fetch my box with my briefs bishop's letters and a bull!'¹

'By Christ!' quoth a common woman 'thy company I'll follow,

Thou shalt say I'm thy sister I know not where they've gone!'

¹ See page 204.

PASSUS VI

'THIS were a wicked way unless we had a guide
That would show us each step' thus these folk complained.
Quoth Perkin the plowman 'By Saint Peter of Rome!
I've an half acre to plow hard by the highway.
Had I plowed this half acre and sown it after,
I would wend then with you and show you the way.'

'This were long delay' quoth a dame in a veil,
'What should we women work at meanwhile?'

'Some shall sew sacks,' quoth Piers 'for sheltering the wheat;
And ye, lovely ladies with your long fingers,
Have silk and sendal to sew, while there's time,
Chasubles for chaplains churches to honour.
Wives and widows wool and flax spin;
Make cloth, I counsel you and so teach your daughters.
The needy and naked take heed how they lie
And contrive for them clothes for so commands Truth.
I shall get them livelihood unless the land fails,
Flesh and bread both to rich and to poor,
As long as I live for the Lord's love of Heaven.
And all manner of men that by meat and drink live,
Help ye them to work well that win you your food.'

'By Christ!' quoth a knight then 'he teaches the best;
But on this theme truly taught was I never.

Teach me,' quoth the knight 'and, by Christ, I will try!'

'By Saint Paul!' quoth Perkin 'ye proffer so fairly
That I'll swink and sweat and sow for us both,
And other labours do for thy love all my lifetime,
In covenant that thou keep Holy Church and myself
From wasters and wicked men that this world destroy.
And go and hunt hardily for hares and for foxes,
For boars and for badgers that break down mine hedges;
And go train thy falcons wildfowl to kill,
For such come to my croft and crop off my wheat.'

Courteously the knight then answered these words:

'By my powers, Piers,' quoth he 'I plight thee my troth

That pact to fulfil though for it I fight;
As long as I live I shall thee maintain.'

'Yea; yet one point,' quoth Piers 'I pray of you more.

Look ye sue no tenant unless Truth assent.

Though he may amerce them let Mercy be taxer

And Meekness thy master in spite of Meed's checks.

And though poor men proffer you presents and gifts,

Take it not; for perchance ye may not deserve it,

And then must repay it again at a year's end

In a full perilous place purgatory called.

Mishandle not bondmen the better may thou speed.

Though he be underling here well may happen in heaven

That he'll be worthier set more blissful than thou,

Unless thou do better and live as thou shouldest:

Amice, ascende superius.

'In the charnel at church churls are hard to pick out,

Or a knight from a knave know this in thine heart.

See thou'rt true of thy tongue and tales that thou hate,

Unless they have wisdom to chasten thy workmen.

Hold with no rascals and hear not their tales,

Especially at meat such men eschew;

They're the devil's minstrels I bid thee to know.'

'I assent, by St James!' said the knight then,

'For to work by thy words while my life endures.'

'And I shall apparel me,' quoth Perkyn 'in pilgrim's wise,

And wend with you I will till we find Truth;

Put on me my clothes patched-up and ragged,

My leggings and mittens 'gainst cold of my nails,

Hang my seed basket at my neck instead of a scrip,

And a bushel of breadcorn bring me therein;

For I will sow it myself and then will I wend

To pilgrimage as palmers do pardon for to have.

Who will help me to plow or to sow ere I wend

Shall have leave, by our Lord! to glean here in harvest

And with it make himself merry spite of who may begrudge it.

And all kinds of craftsmen who will honestly live,

I shall find them food that faithfully work.

Save Jack the juggler and Janet of the stews,

Daniel the dicer and Denot the bawd,

All lying friars and folk of their order,

And Robin the ribald for his smutty words—

Truth told me once and bade me repeat it:
Deleantur de libro viventium I'll not deal with them,
For Holy Church of their like is told no tithe to take:

Qui cum justis non scribantur;

By good luck they've escaped now God them amend!'

Dame Work-while-time-is Pier's wife was called;
His daughter, Do-right-so- or-thy-dame-shall-thee-beat;
His son, Suffer-thy-sovereigns- to-have-their-will-
Judge-them-not-for-if-thou-dost- thou-shalt-it-dearly-rue.
'May God be with all for so his word teacheth.
For now I am hoary and old and have goods of mine own
To penance and pilgrimage I will pass with these others.
Wherefore ere I wend I'll write out my bequest.

'In Dei nomine. Amen I make it myself.

He shall have my soul that best hath deserved it
And if from the fiend will defend for so I believe,
Till I come to his account as my *Credo* me telleth,
To have release and remission on that rental, I hope.
The church shall have my corpse and keep all my bones,
For of my corn and cattle she gathered the tithe.
I paid parson promptly for peril of my soul;
So is he holden, I hope to name me in his mass
And make a *memento*¹ among other Christians.

'My wife shall have my honest gains and no more,
To share with my daughters and my dear children.
For should I today die all my debts are quit;
I bore back what I borrowed ere I to bed went.
And with the residue and remnant by the Rood of Lucca!
I will worship therewith Truth, while I live,
And be his pilgrim at plow for all poor men's sake.
My plow-foot shall be my pike-staff and pick apart the roots
And help my coulter to carve and clean up the furrows.'

Now is Perkin and his pilgrims to the plow gone;
To plow his half acre helped him many.
Ditchers and delvers digged up the balks;
Therewith Perkin was pleased and praised them soon.
Other workmen there were that worked eagerly;
Each man in his manner made himself busy,
And some to please Perkin piked up the weeds.
At high prime-tide Piers let the plow stand,

¹ See page 204.

To oversee them himself and whoso worked best
Should be hired thereafter when harvest time came.

Then sat down some and sang over the ale
And helped plow his half acre with 'Ho, trollo-lolli!'
'On peril of my soul!' quoth Piers out of pure anger,
'Unless ye rise swiftly and speed you to work,
Shall no grain that groweth gladden you at need,
And though ye die for dole devil take him who cares.'

The false fellows were afeared and feigned themselves blind;
Some laid their legs awry in the way such louts know,
And made their moan to Piers and prayed of him grace;
'For we have no limbs to labour with Lord, thanked be thee!
But we pray for you, Piers and for your plow too,
That God of his grace your grain multiply
And yield to you for your alms that ye give us here;
For we can not swink nor sweat such sickness us aileth.'

'If it be sooth,' quoth Piers, 'that ye say I shall soon it espy.
Ye be wasters, I wot well and Truth wots the sooth!
I am his old hind and am bidden by him to warn
Those in this world who have harmed his workmen.
Ye waste what men win with travail and trouble,
But Truth shall teach you his plow-team to drive,
Or ye shall eat barley bread and of the brook drink.
But if one be blind, broken-legged or bolted with irons,
He shall eat wheat bread and drink with myself,
Till God of his goodness amendment him send.
But ye might travail as Truth wills and take meat and hire
To keep kine in the field the corn from the beasts,
To dike or to delve or thresh out the sheaves,
Or help to make mortar or bear muck afield.
In lechery and in lying ye live, and in sloth,
And it is on sufferance that vengeance is not taken.
But anchorites and hermits that eat not but at noon,
And no more ere the morrow mine alms shall they have,
And my goods shall clothe those that have cloisters and churches.
But Robert the runabout shall have naught of mine,
Nor friars; unless they preach well and have leave of the bishop—
These shall have bread and pottage and make themselves at ease:
'Tis an unreasonable religion¹ hath right naught to depend on.'

Then a waster was wrath and so would have fought,

¹ See page 204.

And to Piers the Plowman he proffered his glove.
A Breton, a braggart at Piers boasted too;
Bade him piss with his plow for a starveling wretch!
'Willy or nilly we will have our will;
Of thy flour and thy flesh fetch when us like
And make merry therewith despite thy accounts.'

Then Piers the Plowman complained to the knight
To keep him, as covenant was from cursed wretches
And from these wolfish wasters that do the world harm:
'For they waste and win naught and meanwhile there'll be
No plenty for the people while my plow be idle.'

Courteously the knight then as his nature was,
Warned the waster and told him to mend:
'Or, by the order I bear thou shalt suffer the law!'

'I was not wont to work,' quoth Waster 'and now will not begin'—
And made light of the law and less of the knight,
Set Piers and his plow at the price of a pea
And menaced Pier's men if they met again soon.

'Now by peril of my soul I shall punish you all!'
Piers whooped after Hunger who heard him at once.
'Avenge me,' quoth he, 'on these wasters who worry the world!'

Hunger in haste then seized Waste by the maw
And wrung him so by the belly that both his eyes watered;
The Breton he buffeted about the cheeks
That he looked lantern-jawed all his life after.
He beat them so both that he near burst their ribs;
Had not Piers with a pease-loaf prayed Hunger to cease
They had been buried both believe thou none other!
'Suffer them to live,' he said 'let them eat with the hogs
Or else beans and bran baked up together,
Or else milk and mean ale' thus prayed Piers for them.

Loungers for fear thereof fled into barns
And flapped on with flails from morning till eve,
So that Hunger less hardily looked upon them,
For a potful of pease that Piers had made.
A heap of hermits hung on to spades
And cut up their capes to make themselves coats,
And went out as workmen with spades and with shovels
To dig and to delve to drive away hunger.

The blind and bedridden were bettered by thousands;
Those that sat to beg silver soon were they healed;

For what was baked for a horse was a boon for the hungry,
 And many a beggar for beans glad was to sweat,
 And each poor man was well pleased to have pease for his hire;
 And what Piers prayed them to do they did swift as a sparhawk.
 Thereof was Piers proud and put them to work,
 Gave them meat as he might and a moderate hire.

Then had Piers pity and prayed Hunger to wend
 Home into his own place and holden him there.
 'For I am well avenged now of wasters, through thy might.
 But I pray thee, ere thou pass' quoth Piers to Hunger,
 'With beggars and bidders what's best to be done?
 For I wot well, when thou'rt gone they will work full ill;
 For misfortune makes them to be so meek now
 And for default of their food this folk is at my will.
 They're my brethren by blood for God bought us all.
 Truth taught me once to love them each one
 And to help them in all things always, as they need.
 And now would I know of thee what were the best,
 How I might master them and make them to work.'

'Hear now,' quoth Hunger 'and hold it for wisdom:
 Bold beggars and big that might earn bread by work,
 With hounds' bread and horse bread hold up their hearts,
 Abate them with beans to keep down their bellies;
 And if grumblers grouse bid them go work,
 And they shall sup sweeter when they've it deserved.
 'And if thou find any fellow that any false man
 Or fortune hath injured find how such to know!
 Comfort him with thy goods for Christ's love of Heaven,
 Love them and lend to them so God's law teacheth:

Alter alterius onera portate.

And all manner of man that thou mayest espy
 That be needy and have naught help them with thy goods;
 Love them and loathe them not let God take the vengeance;
 If they've done thee evil let thou God alone;

Mihi vindicta, & ego retribuam.

If thou wilt be gracious before God do as the gospel teacheth,
 And be loved among lowly men so shalt thou have grace,

Facite vobis amicos de mamona iniquitatis.'

'I would not grieve God for all the goods on ground.
 Might I do as thou sayest and be sinless?' said Piers then.

'Yea, I promise thee,' quoth Hunger 'or else the Bible lieth.

Go to Genesis the giant engenderer of us all:

"*In sudore* and swink thou shalt earn thy meat
And labour for livelihood" and so our Lord bade.

And Wisdom saith the same I saw it in the Bible:

"*Piger prae frigore* no field would till,

Therefore shall he beg and bid and no man cure his hunger."

'Matthew-with-man's-face mouthed these words,
That *servus nequam* had a coin and as he would not chaffer
Had rebuke of his master for evermore after;

Who because he would work not took away his coin

And gave that coin to him that ten others had;

And with that he said so that Holy Church heard:

"He that hath shall have and be helped when he needeth,

And he that naught hath shall naught have and no man him help;

And of that he weeneth to have I will him bereave."

'Mother-Wit wisheth that each wight should work

In diking or in delving or travailling in prayers;

At contemplative or active life Christ would that men work,

The psalter saith in the psalm of *Beati omnes*,

He that feedeth himself with his faithful labour

He is blessed by the Book in body and in soul:

Labores manuum tuarum, etc.'

'Yet I pray you,' quoth Piers '*par charité*, if ye know

Any line of leechcraft teach it me, my dear.

For some of my servants and myself also

For all a week work not so our belly acheth.'

'I wot well,' quoth Hunger 'what sickness you aileth;

You have munched overmuch and that maketh you groan.

But I bid thee,' quoth Hunger 'as thou thine health willest,

That thou drink not each day ere thou dine somewhat.

Eat naught, I command thee ere hunger thee take

And send thee of his sauce to savour thy lips;

And keep some till supper-time and sit not too long,

Rise up ere appetite have eaten his fill.

Let not Sir Surfeit sit at thy board;

Listen not, for he is lecherous and lickerish of tongue,

After many manner of meats his maw is anhungered.

'And if thou diet thee thus I dare lay mine ears

That Physic his furred hoods for his food shall sell,

And his Calabrian cloak with the knots of gold,

And be fain, by my faith his physic to leave

And learn to labour on land for livelihood's sweet.
For murderers are many leeches the Lord them amend!
Making men die through their drinks ere destiny wills.'

'By St Paul,' quoth Piers 'these are profitable words!
Wend thou, Hunger, when thou wilt and well be thou ever.
For this lovely lesson may the Lord requite thee.'

'I swear to God,' quoth Hunger 'hence will I not wend
Till I have dined this day and drunken also.'

'I have no penny,' quoth Piers 'pullets for to buy,
Nor neither geese nor pigs but two green cheeses,
A few curds and cream and an oaten cake,
And two loaves of beans and bran baked for my youngsters.
And yet I say, by my soul I have no salt bacon;
Nor no hen's eggs, by Christ collops¹ for to make.
But I have parsley and leeks with many cabbages,
And a cow and a calf a cart-mare also
To draw dung afield while the drought lasteth.
With this for our living we must live until Lammas time come,
And by that I hope I have harvest in my croft;
Then may I make thee thy dinner as I'd like to dearly.'
All the poor people then their peascods fetched,
Beans and baked apples they brought in their laps,
Onions and chervils and many ripe cherries,
And proffered Piers this present wherewith to please Hunger.

Hunger ate all in haste and asked after more.
Then poor folk for fear fed Hunger quickly;
With green leeks and pease to poison him they sought.
By that it nighed near harvest new corn came to market;
Then were folk fain and fed Hunger with the best,
With good ale, as Glutton taught and made Hunger go sleep.

Then would Waster not work but wandered about,
Nor no beggar eat bread that had beans therein
But asked for the best white, made of clean wheat;
Nor none halfpenny ale in no wise would drink,
But of the best and the brownest for sale in the borough.

Labourers that have no land to live on but their hands
Deigned not to dine at day on worts a night old.
May no penny ale please them nor no piece of bacon,
Only fresh flesh or fish fried, roast, or baked,
And that *chaud* or *plus chaud* 'gainst chilling their maw.

¹ See page 204.

He must be hired at a high rate else will he chide,
And wail at the time when he was workman made;
And against Cato's counsel begins he to rail:

Paupertatis onus patienter ferre memento.

He has grievances against God and grumbles against Reason;
Then curseth he the king and all his counsel after
For licensing laws that labourers grieve.
But while Hunger was their master then would none of them chide
Nor strive against his statute so sternly he looked.

But I warn you, workmen earn while ye may,
For Hunger hitherward hasteth him fast,
He shall awake with water wasters to chasten.
Ere five years be fulfilled such famine shall arise,
Through floods and foul weather all fruits shall fail.
So said planet Saturn ¹ and sent to warn you:
When ye see the sun gone amiss and heads of two monks,
And a Maid have the mastery and multiply by eight,
Then shall Death withdraw him and Dearth be the judge,
And Davy the ditcher shall die of hunger,
Unless God of his goodness do grant us a truce.

¹ See page 204.

PASSUS VII

TRUTH hereof heard tell and to Piers he sent,
To take him his team and to till the earth;
And provided a pardon *a poena et a culpa*¹
For him, and for his heirs for evermore after.
And bade him hold him at home and plow up his fields,
And all that helped him to plow to set or to sow,
Or any other work that might Piers avail,
Pardon with Piers Plowman Truth them hath granted.

Kings and knights that keep Holy Church
And rightfully in realms rule over the people
Have pardon through purgatory to pass full lightly,
With patriarchs and prophets in paradise to be fellows.

Bishops most blessed if they be as they should,
Legists of both the laws to preach to the lawless,
And inasmuch as they may amend all sinners,
Are peers with the apostles (this pardon Piers showeth),
And at the day of doom at the high dais to sit.

Merchants to the good had many years,
But none *a poena et a culpa* would the pope them grant,
For they hold not her holy days as Holy Church teacheth,
And they swear 'by their souls' and 'so God must them help'
Clean against conscience merchandise to sell.

But under his secret seal Truth sent them a letter
That they should buy boldly what they liked best,
And afterwards sell again and save their profits
Therewith to amend *maisons Dieu* and miserable folk help;
To repair rotten roads where plainly required;
And to build up bridges that were broken down;
Help maidens to marry or make of them nuns;
Poor people and prisoners to find them their food;
And set scholars to school or to some other craft;
Relieve poor religious and lower their rents—
'And I shall send you myself Michael mine archangel,
That no devil shall you daunt nor fright you at death,

¹ See page 204.

And keep you from despair if ye will thus work,
And send your souls safely to my saints in joy.'

Then were merchants merry many wept for joy,
And praised Piers the Plowman that provided this bull.
Men of law less pardon had that pleaded for Meed;
For the psalter saveth not them such as taketh gifts,
And especially from innocents that no evil know:

Super innocentem munera non accipies.

Pleaders should take much pains to plead and help such;
Princes and prelates should pay for their travail:

A regibus & principibus erit merces eorum.

But many justices and jurors would do more for fees
Than *pro Dei pietate* believe thou none other.
But he that spendeth his speech and speaketh for the poor
That is innocent and needy and no man oppresseth,
Comforteth them in that case without coveting gifts,
And sheweth law for our Lord's love as it hath learned,
Shall no devil at his death-day daunt him with fear
That his soul is not safe as witness the psalms:

Domine, quis habitabit in tabernaculo tuo, etc.

But to buy water, wind, wit or fire, the fourth—
These four the Father of Heaven made for his fold in common;
And these be Truth's treasures true folk to help,
And shall never wax nor wane without God himself.

Those that pence of poor men for their pleading take
Find their pardon full small at their parting hence,
When they draw on to die and indulgences would have.
Ye legists and lawyers hold this for the truth,
That if that I lie Matthew is to blame,
For he bade me write this and this proverb told:

Quodcumque vultis ut faciant vobis homines, facite eis.

All living labourers that live by their hands
And take the just wages they honestly earn,
And live in love and in law for their lowly hearts
Have the same absolution that was sent to Piers.

Beggars and bidders are not in the bull,
Unless the occasion be honest that makes them to beg.
He that beggeth or cadgeth unless he have need
Is as false as the fiend and defraudeth the needy;
He beguileth the giver all against his will
For if he wist he were not needy he would give to another

That were more needy than he so the neediest would be helped.

Cato teacheth men thus and the Clerk of the Stories;

Cui des, videto is Cato's teaching

And in the stories he teacheth to bestow thine alms well:

Sit elemosina tua in manu tua, donec studes cui des.

But Gregory was a good man and bade give to all

That asketh for his love that giveth to us all:

Non eligas cui miserearis, ne forte praetereas illum qui meretur accipere.

Quia incertum est pro quo Deo magis placeas.

For wit ye never who is worthy but God wot who hath need.

In him that taketh is the treachery if treason there be;

For he that giveth, parteth and prepareth him to rest,

But he that beggeth, borroweth and bringeth himself in debt.

For beggars borrow evermore and their bail is God

To repay those that give to them with interest added:

Quare non dedisti pecuniam meam ad mensam,

Ut ego veniens cum usuris exegissem illam?

Therefore beg not, ye beggars unless ye've great need.

For whoso must buy him bread the Book beareth witness,

Hath enough that hath bread enough though he have naught else.

Satis dives est, qui non indiget pane.

Find habit and solace in reading saints' lines;

The Book banneth begging and blameth them thus:

*Junior fui, et jam senui: et non vidi justum derelictum, nec semen ejus
quaerens panem.*

For ye live not in love and hold to no law.

Many of you wed not the women you go with,

But like whinnying beasts mount them and tread them,

And so bring forth children that bastards men call.

If the back or some bone is broken in youth,

Ye will exploit that child for evermore after.

There is more misshaped people among all these beggars

Than of other manner of men that on this mould move.

And they that live thus their life may well loathe the time

That ever he was born when he shall hence fare.

But old men and hoary without help or strength,

And all women with child that can work no more,

The blind and bedridden and broken in limb,

That bear mischief meekly as lepers and others,

Have as plenary a pardon as the plowman himself;

For love of their lowly hearts our Lord hath them granted

Their penance and purgatory here on this earth.

'Piers,' quoth a priest then 'thy pardon must I read,
For I will construe each clause and tell it in English.'

And Piers at his prayer the pardon unfoldeth,
And I behind both beheld all the bull.

All in two lines it lay and not a leaf more,
And was written right thus in witness of Truth:

Et qui bona egerunt, ibunt in vitam aeternam; qui vero mala, in ignem aeternum.

'Peter!' quoth the priest then 'I can no pardon find
But "Do well and have well and God shall have thy soul;
But do evil and have evil and after thy death-day
The Devil have thy soul hope thou none other."'

And Piers in vexation tore it in twain,
And said: '*Si ambulavero in medio umbrae mortis non timebo mala: quoniam tu mecum es.*

'I shall cease from my sowing and swink not so hard,
Nor about my belly-joy so busy be more.
Of prayers and of penance shall my plow be hereafter,
And I'll weep when I should sleep though my wheat-bread fail.
The prophet his bread ate in penance and sorrow,
And by what psalter saith so did many others;
Whoso loveth God loyally can live upon little:

Fuerunt mihi lacrimae meae panes die ac nocte.

'And, unless Saint Luke lie he shows by the birds
We should not be too busy about the world's bliss.
Ne solliciti sitis he saith in the gospel,
And sheweth us by examples our own selves to guide.
The fowls in the fields who feeds them in winter?
They've no garner to go to God finds for them all.'

'What!' quoth priest to Perkin 'Peter! as methinketh,
Thou art lettered a little who learned thee thy book?'

'Abstinence the abbess,' quoth Piers 'mine A B C taught me,
And Conscience came after and taught me much more.'

'Wert thou priest, Piers,' quoth he 'thou mightest preach where thou
wouldest,

As a divine in divinity with *dixit insipiens* for theme.'

'Ignorant fool!' quoth Piers 'little lookest thou on the Bible,
And the saws of Solomon seldom thou seest:

Ejice derisores et jurgia cum eis, ne crescant, etc.'

Thus the priest and Perkin opposed one to the other.

Through their words I awoke and looked about
 And saw the sun in the south set at that time,
 Meatless and moneyless on Malvern hills
 And musing on this vision I went on my way.

Many times this vision hath made me study
 Of that I saw sleeping if so it might be;
 And also of Piers Plowman full pensive in heart;
 And what pardon he had all the people to comfort,
 And how the priest had impugned it with just two words.
 I've no savour in soothsaying I see it oft fail;
 And the canonists and Cato counsel us not
 To put faith in divining fo *somnia ne cures*.
 But the book of the Bible clearly bears witness
 How Daniel divined the dreams of a king,
 That was Nebuchadnezzar named by the clerks.
 To whom Daniel said: 'Sir King thy dream betokeneth
 That unknown knights shall come thy kingdom to cleave;
 Amongst lower lords thy lands shall be divided.'
 And as Daniel divined indeed it fell out,
 The king lost his lordship and lower men had it.
 And Joseph dreamed marvellously how the moon and sun
 And the eleven stars of heaven saluted him all.
 Then Jacob judged of Joseph's dream:
 '*Beau fils*,' then quoth his father 'for our lack we shall,
 I myself and my sons seek you in our need.'

As his father said it befell in Pharaoh's time,
 That Joseph was justice Egypt to govern;
 It befell as his father told his friends there him sought.
 And all this maketh me on this dream to think:
 And how the priest proved no pardon like Do-well,
 And deemed that good deeds an indulgence surpassed,
 And biennials and triennials¹ and letters of bishops.
 And how Do-well at Doomsday is honourable held,
 Surpassing the pardon of Saint Peter's church.

Now hath the pope power to grant the people
 Remission of penance to pass into Heaven:
 This is our belief as lettered men teach us:

Quodcumque ligaveris super terram, erit ligatum et in coelis, etc.
 So I believe loyally (the Lord forbid else!)

That pardon, penance, and prayers cause to be saved

¹ See page 204.

Souls that have sinned seven times deadly.
But to trust to indulgences truly methinketh,
Is not so safe for the soul as it is to do well.

Therefore I advise all you the rich on this earth
That on trust of your treasure triennials can have,
Be ye never the bolder to break the ten laws
And especially ye, masters mayors, and judges,
Who for wise men are held and have this world's wealth
To purchase your pardons and the pope's bulls.
At the dreadful Doom when the dead shall arise
And come all before Christ their account to yield,
How thou leddest thy life and here his laws kept,
And how thou didst day by day the doom will declare:
Then a poke full of pardons as provincials' letters,
Though found in the fraternity of all the friars' orders
With doublefold indulgence unless good deeds help you,
I put your patents and pardons at one pea-pod's value!
Therefore I counsel Christians to cry God mercy,
And Mary his mother be our mediatress,
That God give us grace here ere that we go hence
That we may work such works while we are here
That after our death-day Do-well will declare
At the day of Doom that we did as he bade.

PASSUS VIII

THUS robed in russet I roamed about
All a summer season for to seek Do-well,
And inquired full oft of folk that I met,
If any wight wist where Do-well was at in,
And what man he might be of many men I asked.
Was never wight as I went that could show me the way
Where this man dwelled less nor more;
Till it befell on a Friday two friars I met,
Masters of the Minors men of great wit.¹
I hailed them politely as I had learned,
And prayed them, for charity ere they passed further,
If they knew any country or coasts, as they went,
Where that Do-well dwelleth grant me to know.

For they be men of this mould that most widely walk,
And know countries, and courts and poor men's cots,
And Do-well and Do-evil where they dwell both.

'Amongst us,' quoth the Minors 'that man is dwelling,
And ever hath, as I hope and ever shall hereafter.'

'Contra,' quoth I like a clerk and began to dispute,
And told them truly, '*septies in die cadit justus*;
Seven times, saith the Book sinneth the righteous.
And whoso sinneth,' I said 'doth evil, as methinketh,
And Do-well and Do-evil may not dwell together.
Ergo, he is not always among you friars;
He is sometimes elsewhere teaching the people.'

'I shall tell thee, my son' said the friar then,
'How seven times the upright in a day sinneth;
By a picture,' quoth the friar 'I shall thee fair show.

'Put a man in a boat on a broad water,
The wind and the water and the boat rocking
Make the man many a time to fall and recover;
For stand he never so firm he stumbleth if he move;
And yet is he safe and sound and so it behoves him,
For if he did not rise quickly and reach for the helm,

¹ See page 204.

The wind would with the water the boat overthrow;
And then were his life lost through his own neglect.
And thus it falleth,' quoth the friar 'to folk here on earth;
The water is likened to the world that waneth and waxeth,
The goods of this earth are like to the great waves,
That as winds and weather toss about.

The boat is likened to our body that brittle is by nature,
So through the fiend and the flesh and the fickle world,
Sinneth the upright a day, seven times.

'But deadly sin doth he not for Do-well him keepeth,
And that Christ the champion chief help against sin;
For he strengtheneth man to stand and steareth man's soul,
And though thy body waver as boat doth in water,
Ever is thy soul safe unless thyself will
Do a deadly sin and drown so thy soul;
God will suffer well thy sloth if thyself liketh.
For he gave thee a new year's gift¹ to care well for thyself,
And that is wit and free will to every wight a portion,
To flying fowls to fishes and to beasts.

But man hath most thereof and most is to blame
Unless he work well therewith as Do-well him teacheth.'

'I have no natural knowing,' quoth I 'to conceive all your words,
But if I may live and look I shall go to learn better.'
'I commit thee to Christ,' quoth he 'that on the cross died.'
And I said, 'The same save you from mischance,
And give you grace on this ground good men to become.'

And thus I went widely walking alone,
By a wild wilderness and by a wood side.
Bliss of the birds made me abide,
And under a linden in a glade leaned I awhile,
To listen to the lays the lovely fowls made.
Mirth of their mouths made me there to sleep;
The most marvellous dream met me then
That ever dreamed wight in world as I ween.

A tall man, as methought and like to myself,
Came and called me by my own name.

'What art thou?' quoth I then 'that thou my name knowest?'
'That thou knowest well,' quoth he 'and no wight better.'

'Know I what thou art?' 'Thought,' said he then,
'I have attended thee these seven years sawest thou me no sooner?'

¹ See page 204.

'Art thou Thought?' quoth I then 'canst thou me show
Where that Do-well dwelleth and let me know?'

'Do-well and Do-better and Do-best the third,' quoth he,
'Are three fair virtues and be not far to find.
Whoso is true of his tongue and of his two hands,
And through his labour or through his land his livelihood winneth.
And is trusty of his tallying taketh but his own,
And is not a drunkard nor disdainful Do-well is with him.

'Do-better doth right thus but he doth much more;
He is as lowly as a lamb and gentle of speech,
And helpeth all men as they are in need;
The bags and the purses he hath burst them all
That the earl Avaricious held, and his heirs;
And thus with Mammon's money he hath made him friends,
And hath hurried into religion and hath translated the Bible,
And preacheth to the people St Paul's words.

Libenter suffertis insipientes, cum sitis ipsi sapientes.

"And suffer the unwise with you for to live."
And with glad will do them good for so God you bids.

'Do-best is above both and beareth a bishop's crozier;
It is hooked at one end to hale men from hell.
A spike is on that staff to strike down the wicked
That watch for any wickedness Do-well to vex.
And Do-well and Do-better amongst them ordained
To crown one to be king to rule them both;
But if Do-well or Do-better act against Do-best,
Then shall the king come and cast them in irons,
And unless Do-best plead for them they to be there for ever.

'Thus Do-well and Do-better and Do-best the third,
Crowned one to be king to watch over them all,
And to rule the Realm by their three wits,
And none otherwise but as they three assented.'

I thanked Thought then that he me thus taught;
'But yet satisfies me not thy saying I long to learn
How Do-well, Do-better and Do-best do amongst the people.'

'But Wit can teach thee,' quoth Thought 'where those three dwell;
Else know I none that can that now is alive.'

Thought and I thus three days we went,
Discussing Do-well day after other,
And ere we were aware with Wit did we meet.
He was long and lean like to no other,

Was no pomp in his apparel nor poverty neither,
Sober in his semblance and of mild mien.
I dared move no matter to make him dispute,
But I begged Thought then to be intermediary,
And put forth some proposition to test his wits,
What was Do-well from Do-better and Do-best from them both.

Then Thought at that time said these words,
'Where Do-well, Do-better and Do-best be in the land,
Here is Will would know if Wit can teach him,
And whether he be man or no man this man fain would discover,
And act as they three would have this is his purpose.'

PASSUS IX

'SIR DO-WELL dwelleth,' quoth Wit 'not a day hence,
 In a castle that Kind ¹ made of four kinds of things;
 Of earth and air is it made mingled together,
 With wind and with water certainly joined.
 Nature hath closed therein craftily withal,
 A beloved that he loveth as himself,
Anima ² she is called but Envy her hateth,
 A proud pricker of France *princeps hujus mundi*,
 And would win her away with wiles, if he might.
 But Kind knoweth this well and keepeth her the better,
 And hath placed her with Sir Do-well who is duke of these marches.
 Do-better is her damsel Sir Do-well's daughter,
 To serve this lady truly both early and late.
 Do-best is above both a bishop's peer;
 What he bids must be done he ruleth them all;
Anima that lady is led by his teaching.

'But the constable of that castle who keepeth all the watch,
 Is a wise knight withal Sir Conscience he is called,
 And hath five fair sons by his first wife;
 Sir See-well and Say-well and Hear-well the kind,
 Sir Work-well-with-thine-hand an active man of strength,
 And Sir Godfrey Go-well great lords in truth.
 These five are set to save this lady *Anima*,
 Till Kind come or send to save her for ever.'

'What kind of thing is Kind,' quoth I 'canst thou me tell?'

'Kind,' quoth Wit 'is a being of all kinds of things;
 Father and former of all that ever was made;
 And that is the great God that beginning had never,
 Lord of life and of light of joy and of pain.
 Angels and all things are at his will.
 But man is him most like in mark and in form;
 For through the word that he spake came forth beasts,

Dixit, et facta sunt;

And made man likest to himself, one,

¹ See page 204.

² See page 204.

And Eve of his rib-bone without any mediary.
 For he was sole of himself and said *faciamus*,
 As who saith, "more must be here than my word one;
 My might must help now with my speech."
 Right as a lord should make letters and he lacked parchment,
 Though he knew how to write never so well if he had no pen,
 The letters for all the lordship I believe, were never made.

'And so it seemeth by him as the Bible telleth,

There he said, *dixit, et facta sunt*;

He must work with his word and his wit show.
 And in this manner was man made through might of God almighty,
 With his word and workmanship and with life to endure.
 And thus God gave him a soul of the Godhead of heaven,
 And of his great grace granted him bliss,
 And that is life that aye shall last to all his lineage after.
 And that is the castle that Kind made *Caro* it is called,
 And is as much as to say man with a soul;
 And that he wrought with work and with word both;
 Through might of the majesty man was made.

'Conscience and all wits closed be therein,

For love of the lady *Anima* who Life is named;
 Over all in man's body she walketh and wandereth,
 And in the heart is her home and her chief rest.
 But Conscience is in the head and to the heart he looketh,
 What *Anima* loves or loathes he allows her at his will;
 For after the grace of God the greatest is Conscience.

'Much woe to that man that misruleth his Conscience,
 And that be greedy gluttons their god is their belly;

Quorum deus venter est.

For they serve Satan their soul shall he have;
 That liveth sinful life here their soul is like the devil.
 And all that live good life are like God almighty,

Qui manet in caritate, in Deo manet, etc.

'Alas! that drink shall undo what God bought dear,
 And makes God forsake them that he shaped to his likeness;

Amen dico vobis, nescio vos; et alibi: et dimisi eos secundum desideria eorum.

'Simpletons that lack Conscience I find that holy church
 Should provide for them that fail and fatherless children;
 And widows that have naught wherewith to win them their food,
 Mad men, and maidens that helpless were;

All these lack Conscience and should be taught.
 'Of this matter I might make a long tale,
 And find many witnesses amongst the four Doctors,
 And that I lie not in that I teach thee Luke beareth witness.

'Godfather and godmother that see their godchildren
 In grief and misfortune and may them comfort,
 Shall have penance in purgatory unless they them help.
 For more is due to the little child ere he the law knows,
 Than naming of name and he never the wiser!
 Would no Christian creature cry at the gate,
 Nor lack bread nor soup if prelates did as they should.
 A Jew would not see a Jew go begging for need,
 For all the goods on this earth if he amend it might.

'Alas! that a Christian creature shall be unkind to another,
 Since Jews that we judge Judas' fellows,
 Each of them helpeth the other in that that he needeth.
 Why will not we Christians of Christ's goods be as generous
 As Jews, that be our teachers? shame to us all!
 The commons for their uncharity I fear me, shall pay.

'Bishops shall be blamed for beggars' sake;
 He is worse than Judas that giveth a jester silver,
 And biddeth the beggar go for his torn clothes:

Proditor est prelatus cum Juda, qui patrimonium Christi minus distribuit; et alibi:

Pernitiosus dispensator est, qui res pauperum Christi inutiliter consumit.

He doth not well that doth thus nor dreadeth not God almighty,
 Nor loveth not Solomon's sayings that Wisdom taught;

Initium sapientiae, timor Domini:

That dreadeth God, he doth well; that dreadeth him for love,
 And not for dread of punishment doth in that the better;
 He doth best, that withdraweth him by day and by night
 From wasting any speech or any space of time;

Qui offendit in uno, in omnibus est reus.

'Squandering of time as true as true!

Is most hated upon earth by them that be in heaven,
 And to waste speech that germ is of grace,
 And God's glee-man and a game of heaven;
 Would never the faithful Father his fiddle were un-tuned,
 Nor his gleeman a vagabond a goer to taverns!

'To all true upright men that work desire,
 Our Lord loveth them and lends in calm or storm,

Grace to go to them and gain their livelihood;

Inquirentes autem dominum non minuentur omni bono.

'True wedded living folk in this world is Do-well;
For they must work and earn and the world sustain.
For of their kind they come that confessors are called,
Kings and knights caesars and serfs,
Maidens and martyrs out of one man come.
The wife was made the way for to help the work,
And thus was wedlock wrought with a middle person;
First by the father's will and the friends' council,
And then by assent of themselves as they two might accord.
And thus was wedlock wrought and God himself it made;
In earth its heaven is himself was the witness.

'But false folk faithless thieves and liars,
Wasters and wretches out of wedlock, I trow,
Conceived be in evil time as Cain was by Eve.¹
Of such sinful wretches the psalter maketh mention,

Concepit in dolore, et peperit iniquitatem, etc.:

And all that came of that Cain came to evil end.
For God sent to Seth and said by an angel,
"Thine issue with thine issue I will that they be wedded,
And not thy kind with Cain's coupled nor espoused."

'Yet some, against the sending of our Saviour of heaven,
Cain's kind and his kind coupled together,
Till God was wrath for their works and such a word said,
"That I made man now it me repenteth";

Poenitet me fecisse hominem.

And came to Noah anon and bade not stay:
"Quickly go shape a ship of planks and of boards.
Thyself and thy sons three and then your wives,
Hurry you to that boat and bideth ye therein,
Till forty days be fulfilled that the flood have washed
Clean away the cursed blood that Cain made.
Beasts that now be shall blame the time,
That ever that cursed Cain came on this earth;
All shall die for his deeds by dales and by hills,
And the fowls that fly forth with other beasts,
Except only of each kind a couple,
That in thy shingled ship shall be saved."

'In this the child for the grandsire's guilt,

¹ See page 204.

And all for their forefathers they fared the worse.

The gospel is against this in one degree, I find,

Filius non portabit iniquitatem patris, et pater non portabit iniquitatem filii, etc.

‘But I find, if the father be false and a rascal,
That somewhat the son shall have the sire’s splotches.

Graft on an elder and if thine apple be sweet,

Much marvel methinketh and more, of a rascal

That bringeth forth any child unless he be the same,

And have a savour of the sire seldom seest thou other;

Numquam colligimus de spinis uvas, nec de tribulis ficus.

And thus through cursed Cain came care upon earth;

And all for they wrought wedlock against God’s will.

Therefore have they punishment for their marriages that marry so their
children;

For some, as I see now truly to tell,

For covetousness of wealth unnaturally be wedded.

As unhappy conception cometh of such marriages,

As befell of the folk that I before told.

For good should wed good though they no goods have;

“I am *via et veritas*,” saith Christ “I may prosper all.”

‘It is an uncomely coupling by Christ, as methinketh,

To give a young wench to an old dotard,

Or wed any widow for wealth of her goods,

That never shall child bear except in her arms!

Many a pair since the pestilence have plight them together;

The fruit that they bring forth are foul words,

In jealousy joyless and scolding in bed.

Have they no children but strife and abusing each other.

‘And though they betake them to Dunmow¹ unless the devil help
To try for the flitch fetch they it never;

And unless they both be forsworn that bacon they lose.

‘Therefore I council all Christians covet not to be wed

For covetousness of wealth nor of kindred rich.

But young men and maidens match you together,

Widows and widowers do the same.

For no lands, but for love look ye to be wedded,

And then get ye the grace of God and goods enough to live with.

‘And every manner layman that may not continue,

Wisely go wed and beware him of sin;

¹ See page 204.

For lechery in desire is a limed snare of hell.
Whilst thou art young and thy weapon keen,
Content thee with wiving if though wilt be exempt.
Dum sis vir fortis ne des tua robora scortis,
Scribitur in portis meretrix est janua mortis.

‘When ye have wived, beware and act in due time;
Not as Adam and Eve when Cain was engendered.
For unseasonably, truly between man and woman,
Should no play in bed be unless they both be clean
Both of life and of soul and in perfect charity,
That same private deed do no man should.
And if they lead thus their life it pleaseth God almighty;
For he made wedlock first and himself it said;

Bonum est ut unusquisque uxorem suam habeat, propter fornicationem.

‘And they that otherwise be got for vagabonds be held,
As false folk, foundlings cheaters and liars;
Ungracious in getting goods or love of the people,
Wandering and wasting what they may gain.
Against Do-well they do evil and the devil serve,
And after their death-day shall dwell with the same,
But God give them grace here themselves to amend.

‘Do-well, my friend, is to do as law teacheth;
To love thy friend and thy foe believe me, that is Do-better.
To give and to cherish both young and old,
To heal and to help is Do-best of all.
And Do-well is to dread God and Do-better to suffer,
And so cometh Do-best of both and bringeth down the proud,
And that is wicked will that many a work ruins,
And driveth away Do-well through deadly sins.’

PASSUS X

THEN had Wit a wife was called Dame Study,
 That lean was of face and of body both.
 She was wondrously wrath that Wit me thus taught,
 And all staring Dame Study sternly said,
 'Well art thou wise,' quoth she to Wit 'any wisdom to tell
 To flatterers or to fools that frantic be of wit!'
 And blamed him and scolded him and bade him be still,
 With such wise words from teaching any sots;
 And said '*noli mittere*, man margery pearls ¹
 Amongst hogs, that have haws at will.
 They do but drivel there-on draff is dearer to them
 Than all the precious stones that in Paradise grow.
 I say it of such,' quoth she 'that showeth by their works,
 That they would rather land and lordship on earth,
 Of riches or rents and rest at their will,
 Than all the true sayings that Solomon said ever.
 'Wisdom and wit now is not worth a cress,
 Unless it be carded with covetousness as clothiers comb their wool.
 Whoso can contrive deceits and conspire wrongs,
 And conduct a law-day to hinder truth,
 He that such crafts knows to council is called;
 They lead lords with lies and belie truth.
 'Job the gentle in his tales witnesseth,
 That wicked men they wield the wealth of this world,
 And that they be lords of each a land that out of law live;
 Quare impii vivunt? bene est omnibus, qui praevaricantur et inique agunt.
 The psalter saith the same of such that do ill,
 Ecce ipsi peccatores abundantes; in saeculo obtinuerunt divitias.
 "Lo!" saith Holy Scripture "these lords be rascals!"
 Those to whom God most giveth least goods they dealeth,
 And most unkind to the commons that most wealth wieldeth;
 Quae perfecisti, destruxerunt; justus autem quid fecit?
 Ribalds for their ribaldry may have of their goods,
 And jesters and jugglers and tellers of tales.

¹ See page 204.

'But he that hath holy writ ever in his mouth,
And can tell of Tobit and of the twelve apostles,
Or preach of the punishment that Pilate wrought
On Jesus the gentle that Jews tortured:
Little is he loved that such a lesson showeth,
Or cherished for advancement I call on God himself!

'But those that fain them fools and with falsehood live,
Against the law of our Lord and lie in themselves,
Spit and spew and speak foul words,
Drink and drivel and make men gape,
Mimic and lie against them that give them no gifts,
They know no more minstrelsy nor music,
Than Mund the miller of *multa fecit Deus!*
Nor were their vile ribaldry have God my troth,
If never king nor knight nor canon of Saint Paul's
Gave them for the new year the gift of a groat!
But mirth and minstrelsy amongst men is now
Lechery, lying and vagabonds' tales;
Gluttony and great oaths this mirth they loveth.

'But if they chatter of Christ these ignorant clerks
At meat in their pleasures when minstrels be still,
Then telleth they of the Trinity a tale or two,
And bring forth a bald reason and take Bernard ¹ to witness,
And put forth an assumption to prove the truth.
Thus they drivel at their dais the deity to know,
And gnaw God with their gorge when their guts are full.

'But the miserable may cry and call at the gate,
Both a-hungered and a-thirst and for chill a-quake;
Is none to receive near his anguish to heal,
But shout at him as a hound and bid him go thence.
Little loveth he that lord that gave him all that bliss,
That thus shares with the poor man a portion when he is in need.
Unless mercy were in common men more than in rich,
Mendicants meat-less might go to bed.
God is much in the mouth of these great masters,
But amongst poor men his mercy and his works;
And so saith the psalter I have seen it oft,

Ecce audivimus eam in Ephrata, invenimus eam in campis silvae.

'Clerks and other kinds of men talk of God in plenty,
And have him much on their lips but mean men at heart.

¹ See page 204.

Friars and deceivers have found such questions
 To please with proud men since the pestilence time,
 And preach at Saint Paul's ¹ for pure envy of clerks,
 So that folk are not confirmed in the faith nor free of their goods,
 Nor sorry for their sins so is pride waxed
 In religion and in all the realm amongst rich and poor,
 That prayers have no power the pestilence to stay.
 And yet the wretches of this world is none warned by the other,
 Nor for dread of the Death withdrawn not their pride,
 Nor be plenteous to the poor as pure charity wills,
 But in gayness and gluttony devour their goods themselves,
 And give not to the beggar as the Book teacheth,

Frangere esurienti panem tuum, etc.

And the more he winneth and wields wealth and riches,
 And lordeth it in lands the less goods he distributes.

'Tobit telleth you not so take heed, ye rich,
 How the book Bible of him beareth witness:

Si tibi sit copia, abundanter tribue; si autem exiguum, illud impertiri stude libenter:

Whoso hath much, expend it humanely so meaneth Tobit,
 And whoso little wieldeth rule himself accordingly;
 For we have no compact of our life how long it shall last.
 Such lessons lords should love to hear,
 And how they might the most of the poor humanely succour.

'Not to fare as a fiddler or a friar for to seek feasts,
 At home in other men's houses and hating their own.
 Wretched is the hall each day in the week,
 Where the lord nor the lady liketh not to sit.
 Now hath each rich man a rule to eat by himself
 In a private parlour because of poor men,
 Or in a chamber with a chimney and leave the chief hall,
 That was made for meals men to eat in;
 And all to spare from spilling what spend shall another.

'I have heard high men eating at table,
 Talk as they clerks were of Christ and of his powers,
 And lay faults upon the Father that formed us all,
 And carp against clerks crabbed words;
 "Why would our Saviour suffer such a worm ² into his paradise,
 That beguiled the woman and the man after,
 Through whose wiles and words they went to hell,

¹ See page 204.

² See page 204.

And all their seed for their sin the same death suffered?
 Here lieth your lore" these lords begin to dispute,
 "Of that ye clerks us teacheth of Christ by the gospel;

Filius non portabit iniquitatem patris, etc.

Why should we that now be for the works of Adam
 Perish and be destroyed? reason warrants it never;

Unusquisque portabit onus suum, etc."

'Such motions they move these masters in their vainglory,
 And make men disbelieve that muse much on their words;
 Imaginative hereafter shall answer to your purpose.
 Augustine to such arguers he telleth them this text,

Non plus sapere quam oportet.

Wish never to know why that God would
 Suffer Satan his seed to beguile,
 But believe loyally in the lore of holy church,
 And pray him for pardon and penance in thy life,
 And in his great mercy to amend you here.
 For all that wish to know the ways of God almighty,
 I would his eye were in his arse and his finger after,
 That ever wisheth to know why that God would
 Suffer Satan his seed to beguile,
 Or Judas to the Jews Jesu betray.

All was as thou would'st Lord, worshipped be thou,
 And all shall be as thou wishest whatever we dispute!

'And he that uses these mazes to blind men's wits,
 What is Do-well from Do-better now deaf must he be,
 (Since he wisheth to know what they be both),
 Unless he live in the life that belongs to Do-well;
 For I dare go bail that Do-better will he never,
 Though Do-best draw him day after other.'

And when that Wit was aware what Dame Study told,
 He became so confused he could not look,
 And as dumb as death and withdrew him back;
 And for no speaking I could after nor kneeling to the ground,
 I might get no grain of his great wits,
 But all laughing be bowed and looked upon Study,
 In sign that I should beseech her of grace.

And when I was aware of his will to his wife began I bow,
 And said, 'Your pardon, madame your man shall I become,
 As long as I live both late and soon,
 For to work your will the while my life lasteth,

'With that ye teach me of your kindness to know what is Do-well.'

'For thy meekness, man,' quoth she 'and for thy mild speech,
I shall bring thee to my cousin that Clergy is called.
He hath wedded a wife within these six months,
Is kin to the seven arts¹ Scripture is her name.
They two, as I hope after my teaching,
Shall guide thee to Do-well I dare it undertake.'

Then was I also joyful as bird on fair morning,
And gladder than the gleeman that gold has been given,
And asked her the highway where that Clergy dwelt,
'And tell me some token,' quoth I 'for time is that I went.'

'Ask the highway,' quoth she 'hence of Suffer-
Both-well-and woe if that thou wilt learn,
And ride forth by Riches but rest thou not therein,
For if thou couplest thee therewith to Clergy comest thou never.
And also the lickerish land that Lechery is called,
Leave him on thy left hand a large mile or more,
Till thou come to a court Keep-well-thy-tongue
From-lies-and-vicious-speech and-lickerish-drinks.

'Then shalt thou see Sobriety and Simplicity-of-speech.
That each wight be willing his wit thee to show,
And thus shalt thou come to Clergy that knows many things.
Say to him this sign I set him to school,
And that I greet well his wife for I wrote her many books,
And set her to Wisdom and to the psalter to gloss.

'Logic I taught her and many other laws,
And all the measures in music I made her to know.
Plato the poet I put him first to books,
Aristotle and others more to argue I taught.
Grammar for children I caused first to be written,
And beat them with a birch unless they would learn.
Of all kinds of crafts I contrived tools,
Of carpentry, of carvers and masons with compasses,
And taught them level and line though I look dull.

'But Theology hath troubled me ten score times,
The more I muse therein the mistier it seemeth,
And the deeper I search the darker me it thinketh;
It is no science forsooth to be too subtle in;
A full idle thing it were if it were not for love.
But because it puts Love first I love it the better;

¹ See page 204.

For there that Love is leader never lacked grace.
Look thou love loyally if thou wouldst please Do-well;
For Do-better and Do-best be of Love's kin.
In another science it saith I saw it in Cato,
Qui simulat verbis, nec corde est fidus amicus,
Tu quoque fac simile, sic ars deluditur arte.
Whoso speaks fair as flatterers do let each do the same,
And so shalt thou false folk and faithless beguile,
This is Cato's saying to clerks that he teacheth,
But Theology teacheth not so whoso taketh heed,
He instructs us the contrary against Cato's words;
For he bids us be as brethren and pray for our enemies,
And love them that lie to us and give to them when they need,
And do good against evil God himself it commands,

Dum tempus habemus, operemur bonum ad omnes, maxime autem ad domesticos fidei.

'Paul preached to the people that perfection loved,
To do good for God's love and give to men that asked,
And especially to such that follow our faith.
And all that speak ill or lie to us our Lord teacheth us to love,
And not to grieve them that grieve us God himself has forbidden it,
Mihi vindictam, et ego retribuam.

Therefore look thou love as long as thou livest,
For there is no science under the sun so sovereign for the soul.

'But astronomy is a hard thing and evil for to know,
Geometry and divination are guileful of speech;
Whoso thinketh to work with those two thriveth full late.
For sorcery is the sovereign book that to these sciences belongeth.
And there are tricks in coffers of many men's making,
Experiments in alchemy the people to deceive,
If thou think on Do-well deal therewith never.
All these sciences I myself devised and ordained,
And founded them first folk to deceive.
Tell Clergy these tokens and Scripture after,
To counsel thee kindly to know what is Do-well.'

I said, 'Great thanks, madame' and meekly saluted her,
And went quickly away without more delay.
And till I came to Clergy I knew no stop;
And saluted the good man as Study me taught,
And afterwards the wife and paid them both reverence,
And told them the tokens that me taught were.

Was never man on this earth since God made the world,
 Fairer received nor more at ease among friends,
 Than myself truly soon as he knew
 That I was of Wit's house and with his wife Dame Study.
 I told him truly that sent was I thither,
 Do-well and Do-better and Do-best to learn.

'Do-well is a common life,' quoth Clergy 'on Holy Church to believe,
 With all the articles of the faith that should be known.
 And that is to believe loyally both the learned and unlearned,
 On the great God that beginning had never,
 And on the true Son that saved mankind
 From the deadly death and the devil's power,
 Through the help of the Holy Ghost the which Spirit is of both;
 Three real persons but not in plural number,
 For all is but one God and each is God himself;

Deus Pater, Deus Filius, Deus Spiritus Sanctus;

God the Father, God the Son God the Holy Ghost of both,
 Maker of mankind and of beasts both.

'Austin ¹ the old hereof he made books,
 And himself applied to confirm us in faith.
 Who was his authority? all the four evangelists;
 And Christ called himself so the evangelists beareth witness:

Ego in Patre et Pater in me est; et, qui videt me, videt et Patrem meum.

All the clerks under Christ can not this explain,
 But thus they should believe the unlearned that wish to Do-well.
 For had never man fine wit the faith to dispute,
 No man had any merit could it all be proved:

Fides non habet meritum, ubi humana ratio praebebat experimentum.

'Then it is Do-better to suffer for thy soul's health,
 All that the Book bids by Holy Church's teaching;
 And that is—"man, with thy might for mercy's sake,
 Look thou do the deed that thy word declareth;
 Such as thou seemest at sight be, in the trial, found;

Appare quod es, vel esto quod appares:

And let nobody be by thy bearing beguiled,
 But be such in thy soul as thou seemest without."

'Then is Do-best to be bold to blame the guilty,
 When thou seest thyself as in soul clean;
 But blame thou nobody if thou be blameworthy:

Si culpare velis culpabilis esse cavebis,

¹ See page 205.

Dogma tuum sordet cum te tua culpa remordet.

God in the gospel grimly reproveth

All that blame anyone and faults have themselves:

Quid consideras festucam in oculo fratris tui, trabem in oculo tuo non vides?

Why movest thou thy wrath for a mote in thy brother's eye,

Since a beam in thine own blindeth thyself?

Ejice primum trabem de oculo tuo, etc.,

Which stops thee from seeing less or more.

'I counsel every blind buzzard to remedy himself;

For abbots and for priors and for all manner of prelates,

As parsons and parish priests that preach should and teach,

All manner of men to amend with their might;

This text was told you to be warned, ere ye taught,

That ye were such as ye spoke of with which to save others.

For God's word would not be lost for that worketh ever,

If it availed not the people it might avail yourselves.

'But it seemeth now truly to the world's sight,

That God's word worketh not on learned or unlearned,

Except in such a manner as Mark meaneth in the gospel,

Dum caecus ducit caecum, ambo in foveam cadunt.

Unlearned men may compare you thus that the beam lieth in your eyes,

And the mote is fallen by your fault,

Into all manner of men through cursed priests.

The Bible beareth witness that all the folk of Israel

Bitterly paid for the guilt of two bad priests,

Hophni and Phineas; for their avarice,

*Archa dei*¹ came to grief and Eli broke his neck.

'Therefore, ye correctors, grasp this and correct first yourselves,

And then may ye safely say as David made the psalter:

Existimasti inique quod ero tui similis: arguam te, et statuam contra faciem tuam.

'And then shall lay clerks be abashed to blame you or to grieve,

And carp not as they carp now and call you dumb dogs,

Canes non valentes latrare,

And dread to anger you by any word your work to hinder,

And be readier at your prayer than for a pound of gold;

And all for your holiness have ye this at heart.

Amongst true religious this rule should be held;

Gregory the great clerk and the good pope

¹ See page 205.

Of religion the rule rehearseth in his "Morals,"
 And saith it by illustration what they should do thereafter,
 "When fishes lack the flood or the fresh water,
 They die for drought when they stay dry;
 Right so," quoth Gregory "religion wandereth,
 Perisheth and stinketh and stealeth lords' alms,
 That out of convent and cloister coveteth to live."
 For if heaven be on this earth and ease to any soul,
 It is in cloister or in learning by many proofs I find;
 For in cloister cometh no man to chide nor to fight,
 But all is courtesy there and books to read and to learn.

'In school there is scorn unless a clerk will learn,
 And great love and liking for each of them loveth the other.
 But now is Religion a rider a roamer of the streets,
 A conductor of law-days and a buyer of land,
 A pricker on a palfrey from manor to manor,
 A heap of hounds at his arse as he a lord were.
 And unless his page kneel that shall his cup bring,
 He lowereth on him and asketh him who taught him courtesy?
 Little use for lords to give land away from their heirs
 To religious, who have no care though it rain on their altars!

'In many places where parsons be by themselves at ease,
 Of the poor have they no pity and that is their charity;
 But they hold themselves as lords their land reacheth so far.

'But there shall come a king and confess you of religion,
 And beat you, as the Bible telleth for breaking of your rule,
 And amend nuns monks and canons,
 And put them to their penance *ad pristinum statum ire*;
 And barons and earls beat them through *beatus vir's* teaching,
 And their children make claims and blame you terribly:

Hi in curribus et hi in equis; ipsi obligati sunt, etc.,

'And then friars in the refectory shall find a key
 Of Constantine's¹ coffers in which is the wealth
 That Gregory's god-children have spent so ill.
 And then shall the abbot of Abingdon and all his issue for ever
 Have a knock from a king and incurable the wound.

'That this is true, seek ye that often study the Bible:

*Quomodo cessavit exactor, quievit tributum; contrivit Dominus baculum
 impiorum,*

et virgam dominantium caedentium plaga insanabili, etc.

¹ See page 205.

But ere that king come Cain shall awake.
But Do-well shall smite him down and destroy his might.
'Then is Do-well and Do-better,' quoth I '*dominus* and knighthood.'

'I will not be scornful,' quoth Scripture 'unless scribes lie;
Kinghood nor knighthood by naught I can abide,
Helpeth not to heavenward one hair's length,
Nor riches right not nor pomp of lords.
Paul preacheth it impossible rich men to have heaven,
Solomon saith also that silver is worst to love;

Nihil iniquius quam amare peccuniam.

And Cato teacheth us to covet it not but as governed by need,
Diligere denarium, sed parce dilige formam.

And patriarchs and prophets and poets both
Write to instruct us to long for no riches,
And they praise poverty with patience; the apostles bear witness,
That they have inheritance in heaven and by true right,
Where rich men no right may claim but of mercy and grace.'

'*Contra*,' quoth I, 'by Christ that I can disprove,
And prove it by Peter and by Paul both,
That the baptized be safe be he rich or poor.'

'That is *in extremis*,' quoth Scripture 'amongst Saracens and Jews;
They must be saved so and that is our belief,
That an un-Christian in that case may christen a heathen,
And for his true belief when his life fails,
Have the heritage of heaven as any Christian man.
But Christians without more may not come to heaven,
For Christ for Christian men died and confirmed the law,
That whoso would and wisheth with Christ to arise,

Si cum Christo surrexistis, etc.,

He should love and believe and the law fulfil.
That is—"love thy lord God most dearly above all,
And after, all Christian creatures in common, each man the other";
And thus they should love that look to be saved.
And unless we do thus indeed ere the day of doom,
It shall oppress us full bitterly the silver that we hoard,
And our clothes that moth-eaten have become and seen beggars go naked,
Or delight in wine and wild fowl and know any in need.

'For every Christian creature should be kind to another,
And then the heathen to help in hope of amendment.
God commandeth both high and low that no man hurt other,
And saith, "slay not what resembles mine own likeness,

Unless I send thee some token"; and saith, *non necabis*,
That is, slay not, but suffer and all for the best.

'For, *Mihi vindictam, et ego retribuam*.

"For I shall punish them in purgatory or in the pit of hell,
Each man for his misdeeds save mercy it hinders."

'This is a long lesson,' quoth I 'and little am I the wiser;
Where Do-well is, or Do-better darkly ye show;
Many tales ye tell that Theology teacheth;
And that I, man, made was and my name entered
In the book of life long ere I were,
Or else unwritten for some wickedness as holy writ witnesseth,
Nemo ascendit ad caelum, nisi qui de caelo descendit.

'I believe it well,' quoth I, 'by our Lord and on no doctrine better.
For Solomon the sage that Wisdom taught,
God gave him grace of wit and all his goods after,
To rule the realm and rich to make;
He judged well and wisely as holy writ telleth.
Aristotle and he who taught men better?
Masters that of God's mercy teach men and preach,
Of their words they tell us for wisest in their time,
And all holy church holdeth them damned!
And if I should go by their works to win me heaven,
That for their works and wit now live in pain,
Then did I unwisely whatsoever ye preach.

'But of many wise, in faith little wonder I have,
Though their spirit be ungracious God for to please.
For many men on this earth more set their hearts
On goods than on God therefore them grace faileth,
To their great mischief when they shall life end.
As Solomon did, and such other that showed great wits;
But their works, as holy writ saith was ever the contrary.
Therefore wise witted men and well lettered clerks,
As they say themselves seldom do thereafter,

Super cathedram Moysi, etc.,

'But I think it be of many as was in Noah's time,
When he shaped his ship of planks and boards;
Was never wight saved that wrought thereon nor other workman either,
But birds and beasts and the blessed Noah,
And his wife with his sons and also their wives;
Of wrights that it wrought was none of them saved.
God grant it fare not so with folk that the faith teach

Of holy church, that hartzen is and God's house to save,
And shield us from shame therein as Noah's ship did bear;
And men that made it about the flood drowned.

The culorum of this cause pastors is to mean,
That be carpenters, holy church to make for Christ's own beate,

Homines et jumenta salvabis, Domine, etc.

At doxmeday the deluge be of death and fire at once;
Therefore I comma you clerks of holy church the wrights,
Do your work as ye see written lest ye be worth naught therein.

'On Good Friday I find a felon was saved,
That had lived all his life with falsehood and theft;
And for he acknowledged on the cross and to Christ confessed him,
He was saved before Saint Iohn the Baptist,
And eener Adam or Izaak or any of the prophets,
That had lain with Lucifer many long years.
A robber was ransomed rather than them all,
Without any penance of purgatory to perpetual bliss.

'Then Mary Magdalen what woman did worse?
Or who worse than David that Uriah's death conspired?
Or Paul the apostle that no pity had,
Many Christians to kill to death?
And now be there as sovereigns with saints in heaven,
Those that wrought most wickedly in the world when they were.
And those that wisely spoke and wrote many books
Of wit and wisdom who damned souls live.

What Solomon saith, I trow be true and certain of us all,

Sunt iusti atque sapientes; et opera eorum in manu Dei sunt, etc.;

'They are wise and well-living but their works be hid
In the hands of almighty God and he knows the truth
Whether for love a man be valued there and his true deeds,
Or else for his evil will and envy of heart,
According as he lived for by evil men know the good:
And whereby know men which is white if all things black were,
And who was a good man unless there were some rogue?
Therefore live we still with evil men I think few be good.

For *quand oportet vent en place il n'y a que pati,*

And he that can all amend have mercy on us all!

For truest word that ever God said was when he said, *nemo bonus.*

'Clergy of Christ's mouth commended was little,

For he said to Saint Peter and to such as he loved,

Dum steteritis ante reges et praevidet, etc.;

"Though ye come before kings and clerks of the law,
Be not abashed for I shall be in your mouths,
And give you wit at will and skill to refute
Them all that against you about Christendom dispute."

'David is an example he spake amongst kings,
And might no king overcome him in skill of speech.
But wit nor wisdom won never the mastery,
When man was at mischief without the more grace.
'The doughtiest doctor and interpreter of the Trinity,
Was Augustine the old and highest of the four,
He said thus in a sermon I saw it written once,

Ecce ipsi idiotae rapiunt caelum, ubi nos sapientes in inferno mergimur :

And it means to English man neither more nor less,
"Are none sooner ravished from the right belief
Than are these clever clerks that know many books;
Nor none sooner saved nor firmer of belief,
Than plowmen and herdsmen and poor common labourers."
Cobblers and shepherds such ignorant fellows
Pierce with a *pater noster* the palace of heaven,
And pass purgatory penance-less at their parting hence,
Into the bliss of paradise for their pure faith,
That imperfectly here knew and indeed lived.
Yea, men know clerks that have cursed the time,
That ever they knew more than *credo in Deum Patrem*;
And above all their *pater noster* many a person hath wished.

'I see examples myself and so may many another,
That servants that serve lords seldom fall in debt,
But those that keep the lords' property clerks and reeves.
Right so unlearned men and of little knowledge,
Seldom fall they so foul and so far in sin,
As clerks of holy church that keep Christ's treasure,
The which is man's soul to save as God saith in the gospel:

Ite vos in vineam meam.'

PASSUS XI

THEN Scripture poured scorn on me and a reason gave,
And rated me in Latin and light by me she set,

And said, '*multi multa sciunt, et seipsos nesciunt.*'

Then wept I for woe and wrath of her speech,
And in a drowsy wrath went I to sleep.

A marvellous dream met me then,

So I was ravished on the spot and Fortune me fetched,
And into the land of Longing alone she me brought,
And in a mirror called Middle-Earth she made me to behold.

Then she said to me 'Here may'st thou see wonders,
And know what thou covetest and come thereto, by good luck.'

Then had Fortune following her two fair damsels,

Concupiscentia-carnis men called the elder maid,

And Covetousness-of-eyes called was that other;

Pride-of-perfect-living followed them both,

And bade me, for my favour account Clergy lightly.

Concupiscentia-carnis clasped me around the neck,

And said, 'Thou art young and alive and hast years enough,

For to live long and ladies to love;

And in this mirror thou might see joys full many,

That lead thee will to loving all thy life time.'

The second said the same 'I shall attend thy wish;

Till thou be a lord and have land leave thee I will not,

While I shall follow thy fellowship if Fortune it like.'

'He shall find me his friend' quoth Fortune thereupon;

'The man that followed my will lacked never bliss.'

Then was there one called Age that heavy was of cheer,

'Man,' quoth he, 'if I meet with thee by Mary of heaven,

Thou shalt find Fortune thee fail at thy most need,

And *Concupiscentia-carnis* clean thee forsake.

Bitterly shall thou curse then both days and nights

Covetousness-of-eyes that ever thou her knew,

And Pride-of-perfect-living to much peril thee bring.'

'Yea, reckon thee not,' quoth Recklessness stood forth in ragged clothes,

'Follow forth as Fortune wills thou hast a long way till old age;

A man may stoop times enough when he has gone bald.

"*Homo proponit*," quoth a poet and Plato he is called,
 "And *Deus disponit*," quoth he "let God do his will."
 If Truth will witness it be well done Fortune to follow,
Concupiscentia-carnis nor Covetousness-of-eyes
 Shall not grieve thee greatly nor beguile thee, unless thou will it.
 'Yea, farewell, Philip sparrow!' quoth Childishness and began to
 lead me on,

Till *Concupiscentia-carnis* accorded with all my works.
 'Alas, indeed!' quoth Age and Holiness both,
 'That wit shall turn to wretchedness for Will to have his liking!'
 Covetousness-of-eyes comforted me anon after,
 And followed me forty winters and five more,
 So that Do-well nor Do-better of no value I thought;
 I had no liking, believe me if you will of them aught to know.
 Covetousness-of-eyes came more often to mind
 Than Do-well or Do-better amongst all my deeds.
 Covetousness-of-eyes comforted me often,
 And said, 'Have no conscience how thou come by thy goods
 Go confess thee to some friar and show him thy sins.
 For whilst Fortune is thy friend friars will thee love,
 And fetch thee to their fraternity and for thee beseech
 Their prior provincial a pardon for to have,
 And pray for thee, each of them if thou be *pecuniosus*.'

Sed poena pecuniaria non sufficit pro spiritualibus delictis.

By the teaching of this wench I went the words were so sweet,
 Till I forgot youth and hurried into age.
 And then was Fortune my foe for all her fair promises,
 And Poverty pursued me and brought me low,
 And then found I the friars afraid and flitting both,
 Against our first bargain for I said I would not
 Be buried at their house but at my parish church.
 For I heard once how Conscience it told,
 That where a man was christened by rights he should be buried,
 Or where he was a parishioner right there he should be interred.
 And because I said thus to the friars a fool they me held,
 And loved me the less for my true speech.
 But yet I cried at my confessor that held himself so learned,
 'By my faith, friar,' quoth I 'ye behave like these wooers,
 That wed no widows except to wield their goods;
 Right so, by the rood recked ye never
 Where my body were buried so long as ye had my silver.

I have much wondered at you and so hath many another,
Why your convent coveteth to confess and to bury,
Rather than to baptize children that be catechumens.

Baptizing and burying both be full needful,
But much more meritorious methinketh it is to baptize.

For a baptized man may as masters tell,
Through contrition come to the high heaven:

Sola contritio delet peccatum.

But a child without baptism may not so be saved:

Nisi quis renatus fuerit ex aqua, etc.:

Look, ye lettered men whether I lie or do not.'

And Loyalty looked on me and I lowered after.

'Wherefore lowerest thou?' quoth Loyalty and looked at me hard,

'If I durst,' quoth I, 'amongst men this dream avow!'

'Yea, by Peter and by Paul,' quoth he 'and take them both to witness,

Non oderis fratres secrete in corde tuo, sed publice argue illos.

'They will declare also,' quoth I 'and by the gospel prove,

Nolite judicare quemquam.'

'And wherefore serveth law,' quoth Loyalty 'if no man reproveth it,
Falsehood nor fraud? for some purpose the apostle said,

Non oderis fratrem.

And in the psalter also saith David the prophet,

Existimasti inique quod ero tui similis, etc.

It is *licitum* for laymen to declare the truth.

If it pleaseth them to each a law it granteth.

Except parsons and priests and prelates of holy church,

It falleth not to those folk any tales to tell.

Though the tale were true if it touched on sin.¹

A thing that all the world knows wherefore shouldst thou spare

To counsel on with rhetoric to rate deadly sin?

But be never the first the fault to blame:

Though thou see evil, speak of it not first but be sorry it was not amended.

Nothing that is private publish thou it never,

Neither for love laud it not nor attack it not for envy:

Parum lauda, vitupera parcius.'

[illegible]

But the matter that she dealt with if unlearned men it knew,

The less, I believe love it they would.

¹ See page 205.

This was her theme and her text I took full good heed;
 'Multi to a feast and to the meat were summoned,
 And when the people were come in plenty the porter unlocked the gate,
 And plucked in *pauci* privately and let the rest go hang!'

All for pain of her text trembled mine heart,
 And into a doubt I fell and with myself began to dispute,
 Whether I were chosen or not chosen on Holy Church I thought,
 That received me at the font as one of God's chosen;
 For Christ called us all to come if we willed,
 Saracens and schismatics and so he did the Jews,

O vos omnes sitientes, venite, etc.;

And bade them suck for sin safely at his breast,
 And drink cure for evil receive it whoso will.

'Then may all Christians come,' quoth I 'and claim their entry
 By the blood that he bought us with and through baptism after,

Qui crediderit et baptizatus fuerit, etc.

For though a Christian man coveted his Christianity to reject,
 To reject it with probity no reason will allow.

'For may no churl charter make nor his goods sell
 Without leave of his lord no law will it grant.
 But he may run into arrears and roam then from home,
 And as a renegade rascal recklessly go about;
 But Reason shall reckon with him and rebuke him at the last,
 And Conscience account with him and cast him into debt,
 And put him after in a prison in purgatory to burn,
 And for his debts reward him there to the day of judgment,
 Unless Contrition will come and cry, by his life,
 Mercy for his misdeeds with mouth or with heart.'

'That is true,' said Scripture 'can no sin stop
 Mercy from amending all if meekness goes with her,
 For they be as our books tell the highest of God's works,

Misericordia ejus super omnia opera ejus.'

'Yea, bah for books!' quoth one was broken out of hell,
 Called Trajan,¹ had been a true knight as a pope bore witness,
 How he was dead and damned to dwell in pain,
 As an unchristened creature; — 'clerks know the truth,
 That all the clergy under Christ could not snatch me from hell,
 But only love and loyalty and my rightful judgement.
 Gregory knew this well and wished well for my soul
 Unbeliever, for the virtue that he saw in my works.

¹ See page 205.

And, after that he wept and longed I be granted
Grace, without any bead-bidding his boon was accepted,
And I saved, as ye may see without singing of masses;
By love, and by learning of my living in truth,
Brought me from bitter pain when no praying might.'

Lo, ye lords, what faithfulness did for an emperor of Rome,
That was an unchristian creature as clerks find in books.
Not through prayer of a pope but for his pure truth
Was that infidel saved as Saint Gregory beareth witness.
Well ought ye lords, that laws keep this lesson to have in mind,
And on Trajan's truth to think and give truth to the people.

This matter is murky for many of you but, men of holy church,
The *Legenda Sanctorum* you teacheth better than I you tell!
But thus loyal love and living in truth
Pulled out of pain a pagan of Rome.
Blessed be truth that so broke heli-gates,
And saved this infidel from Satan and his power,
Where no clergy could nor knowledge of laws.
Love and loyalty is a true science;
For that is the Book blessed of bliss and of joy:
God wrought it and wrote it with his finger alone,
And gave it to Moses upon the mount all men to teach.

'Law without love,' quoth Trajan 'count it a bean,
Or any science under sun the seven arts and all,
Unless they be learned in our Lord's love lost is all the time'—
'For no cause to catch silver thereby nor to be called master,
But all for love of our Lord and the better to love the people.
For Saint John said it and soth are his words,

Qui non diligit, manet in morte—

Whoso loveth not, believe me he liveth in death-dying—
And that all manner of men enemies and friends,
Love each other and give as to themselves.
Whoso giveth not, he loveth not God knows the truth,
And commandeth each creature to conform him to love,
And above all poor people their enemies next.
For them that hate us it is our merit to love,
And poor people to please their prayers may us help.
For our joy and our health Jesu Christ of heaven,
In a poor man's apparel pursueth us ever,
And looketh on us in their likeness and that with lovely face,
To know us by our kind heart and casting of our eyes,

Whether we love the lords here before our Lord of bliss;
 And exciteth us by the evangelist that, when we make feasts,
 We should not ask our kin thereto nor no rich men;

"Cum facitis convivia, nolite invitare amicos:

But call the unhappy thereto the bent, and the poor,
 For your friends will feed you and foster you, to repay
 Your feasting and your fair gift each friend repayeth so the other.
 But for the poor I shall pay and well requite their toil,
 That giveth them meat or money and loveth them for my sake."
 For of the best be some rich and some beggars and some poor.
 For all are we Christ's creatures and of his coffers rich,
 And brethren as of one blood as well beggars as earls.
 For on Calvary of Christ's blood Christendom first sprang,
 And brethren in blood we became there by one body won,
 As *quasi modo geniti* and gentle men each one,
 Nor beggar nor knave amongst us unless it sin made;

Qui facit peccatum, servus est peccati, etc.

'In the old law as holy scripture telleth,
 Men's sons men called us each one,
 Of Adam's issue and Eve ever till God-man died;
 And after his resurrection *Redemptor* was his name,
 And we his brethren, through him bought both rich and poor.
 Therefore love we as true brethren shall and each man laugh on the
 other,

And of that each man can spare give aid where it is needed,
 And every man help the other for go hence shall we all;

Alter alterius onera portate.

And be we not ungenerous with our goods nor of our skill either,
 For knows not man how nigh he is to be taken from both.
 Therefore blame no man another though he more Latin knows,
 Nor rebuke not foully for is none without fault.
 For whatever clerks prate of Christianity or otherwise,
 Christ to a common woman said in public at a feast,
 That *fides sua* should save her and heal her of all sins.

'Then is belief a true help above logic or law;

For of logic or of law in *Legenda Sanctorum*
 Is little allowance made unless belief them help.
 For it is long ere logic any lesson reveal,
 And law is loth to love unless he get silver,
 Both logic and law that loveth not to lie,
 I counsel all Christians cleave not thereon too closely.

For some words I find written were of faith's teaching,
That saved sinful men as Saint John beareth witness;
Eadem mensura qua mensi fueritis, remetietur vobis.

Therefore learn we the law of love as our Lord taught,
And as Saint Gregory said for man's soul's health,
Melius est scrutari scelera nostra, quam naturas rerum.

'Why I move this matter is most for the poor,
For in their likeness our Lord oft hath been known.
Witness in Pasch week when he went to Emmaus;
Cleophas knew him not that he Christ were,
For his poor apparel and pilgrim's weeds,
Till he blessed and brake the bread that they eat,
So by his works they wist that he was Jesus;
But by clothing they knew him not nor by speaking of tongue.

'And all was in example to us sinful here,
That we should be humble and courteous of speech,
And apparel us not over proudly for pilgrims are we all;
And in the apparel of a poor man and pilgrim's likeness
Many time God hath been met among needy people,
When never man him saw in company of the rich.

'Saint John and other saints were seen in poor clothing,
And as poor pilgrims begged men's charity.
Jesus Christ from a Jew's daughter was born gentle woman though she
were,

Was a pure poor maid and to a poor man wedded.

'Martha about Mary Magdalen a huge plaint made,
And to our Saviour himself said these words,

*Domine, non est tibi curae quod soror mea reliquit me solam ministrare,
etc.?*

And quickly God answered and both their ways allowed,
Both Martha's and Mary's as Matthew beareth witness,
But poverty God put first and praised it the better;

Maria optimam partem elegit, quae non auferetur ab ea.

'And all the wise that ever were by aught I can discover,
Praise poverty for best life if patience go with it,
And both better and more blessed by many times than riches.
Even though it be sour to suffer there cometh sweet after;
As on a walnut without is a bitter bark,
And after that bitter bark (be the shell away),
Is a kernel of comfort life to restore;
So it is, after poverty or penance patiently taken.

For it maketh man to have mind of God and a great will
 To weep and to well pray whereof groweth mercy,
 Of which Christ is a kernel to comfort the soul.
 And much more peacefully he sleepeth the man that is poor,
 And less he dreadeth death and in dark to be robbed,
 Than he that is right rich reason beareth witness;
Pauper ego ludo, dum tu dives meditaris.

‘Although Solomon said as folk see in the Bible,

Divitias nec paupertates, etc.,

A wiser than Solomon was beareth witness and taught,
 That perfect poverty was no possession to have,
 And life most pleasing to God as Luke beareth witness,

Si vis perfectus esse, vade et vende, etc.;

And means to men that on this earth live,
 Whoso will be pure perfect must possession forsake,
 Or sell it, as saith the Book and the silver give
 To beggars that wander and beg and ask goods for God’s love.

‘For failed never man meat that mighty God served;

Non vidi justum derelictum, nec semen ejus quaerens panem;

As David saith in the psalter to such that be willing
 To serve God in a godly way nor grieveth him no penance,

Nihil impossibile volenti,

Nor lacketh never livelihood linen nor wool,

Inquirentes autem dominum non minuentur omni bono.

If priests were perfect they would no silver take
 For masses nor for matins and not their meat of usurers,
 Nor neither their kirtle nor coat though they for cold should die,
 If they their duty did as David saith in the psalter,

Judica me, Deus, et discerne causam meam.

Spera-in-deo speaketh of priests that have no spending-silver,
 That if they travail truly and trust in God almighty,
 They should lack no livelihood neither woollen nor linen.
 And the title that ye take your orders by telleth ye are in authority;
 Then needeth not you to take silver for masses that ye sing.
 For he that gave you your title should give you your wages,
 Or the bishop that blesseth you if that ye be worthy.

‘For never king nor knight but he had money to spend,
 As became a knight or provided him for his strength;
 It is an unhappy knight and of a caitif king’s making,
 That hath no land nor lineage rich nor good fame of his deeds.
 The same I say for sooth of all such priests,

That have neither learning nor kin but a tonsure one,
And a title, a tale of naught for his livelihood, meaning mischief,
He hath more hope, I believe of gaining through his tonsure
A cure of souls, than through learning or—"fame for clean conduct."
I have wondered why and wherefore the bishop
Maketh such priests that unlearned men betray.

'A charter is challengeable before a chief justice;
If false Latin be in the writing the law it impugneth,
Or writing between the lines or parts over-skipped;
The man that makes such charters for a gawk is held.
So it is a gawk, by God that in his gospel faileth,
Or in mass or in matins maketh any fault,

Qui offendit in uno, in omnibus est reus, etc.

And also in the psalter saith David to over-skippers,

Psallite deo nostro, psallite; quoniam rex terrae Deus Israel; psallite sapienter.

The bishop shall be blamed before God, as I believe,
That tonsures such of God's servants that can not *sapienter*
Sing nor psalms read nor say a mass of the day.
But never neither is blameless the bishop nor the chaplain,
For either of them is indicted and that by "*ignorantia*
Non excusat episcopos nec ignorant priests."

'This concern with unlearned priests hath made me stray from poverty,
The which I praise, where patience is more perfect than riches.'
And much more in dreaming thus with me did one dispute,
And in sleeping I saw all this and then came Kind,
And named me by my name and bade me take heed,
And through the wonders of this world wisdom take.
And on a mountain that Middle-Earth is called as me then thought,
I was led forth by examples to know,
Through each creature and Kind my Creator to love.
I saw the sun and the sea and the sand after,
And where that birds and beasts by their mates they went,
Wild worms in woods and wonderful birds,
With flecked feathers and of many colours.
Man and his mate I might both behold;
Poverty and plenty both peace and war,
Bliss and bale both I saw at once,
And how men took rewards and mercy refused.

Reason I saw truly attending all beasts
In eating, in drinking and in engendering of kind;

And after course of conception none took heed of the other,
As when they had met in rutting-time anon right thereafter,
Males drew them to males in mornings by themselves,
And in evenings also went males from females.

There was not cow nor such creature that conceived had,
That would bellow after bulls nor boar after sow;
Both horse and hounds and all other beasts
Meddled not with their mates that with foal were.

Birds I beheld that in bushes made nests;
Had never man wit to make in the least.
I had wonder from whom and where the magpie learned
To lay the twigs in which she lieth and breedeth;
There is no wright as I think could make a nest would please him;
If any mason made a model thereof much wonder it were.

And yet me marvelled more how many other birds
Hid and covered their eggs full secretly
In marshes and moors that men should them not find,
And hid their eggs when they therefrom went,
For fear of other birds and for wild beasts.
And some met their mates and on trees bred,
And brought forth their birds so all above the ground;
And some birds at the bill through breathing conceived;
And some engendered thus I took note how peacocks bred.
Much marvelled me what master they had,
And who taught them on trees to build so high,
Where neither man nor beast may their birds reach.

And then I looked upon the sea thence forth upon the stars,
Many wonders I saw which I say not now.
I saw flowers in the wood and their fair colours,
And how among the green grass grew so many hues,
And some sour and some sweet wonder me thought;
Of their kind and their colour to speak it were too long.

But what most moved me and impressed my mind,
Was that Reason regarded and ruled all beasts,
Save man and his mate many time and oft
No reason them followed and then I rebuked
Reason, and right to himself I said,
'I have wonder of thee,' quoth I 'that wise art held,
Why thou followest not man and his mate that no mishap them attend?'

And Reason rated me and said, 'Reck thee never,
Why I allow or do not allow thyself hast naught do with it;

Amend thou it, if thou might for my time is to abide.
 Patience is a sovereign virtue and a swift vengeance.
 Who is more long-suffering than God?' quoth he 'No man, as I believe!
 He might amend in a minute's time all that amiss standeth,
 But he suffers it for some man's good and so is it better for us.
 'Holy writ,' quoth that wight 'teacheth men patience;

Propter Deum subjecti estote omni creaturae.

Frenchmen and free men train thus their children,
Belle vertue est souffrance mal dire est petit veniance,
Bien dire et bien souffrir fait lui souffrant a bien venir.
Therefore I counsel,' quoth Reason 'rule thy tongue better,
And ere thou blame any man look if thou be praiseworthy!
For is no creature under Christ can form himself;
And if a man might make himself good among the people,
Each life would be blameless believe thou none other!
Nor shalt thou find but few willing for to hear
Of their faults foul before them rehearsed.

'The wise and the clever wrote thus in the Bible,

De re quae te non molestat, noli certare.

For be a man fair or foul it falleth not for to blame
The shape nor the form that God shaped himself;
For all that he did was well done as holy writ witnesseth,

Et vidit Deus cuncta quae fecerat, et erant valde bona;

And bade every creature in his kind increase,
All for mirth for man that must woe suffer
In temptation of the flesh and of the fiend both.
For man was made of such matter he may not well avoid
That sometimes he is bid to follow his kind;
Cato accordeth therewith *nemo sine crimine vivit.*'

Then caught I colour anon and came to be ashamed,
And awoke therewith woe was me then
That I in dreams might not more have known.
And then spoke I to myself and blamed that time:
'Now I know what Do-well is,' quoth I 'by dear God, as methinketh!'
And as I cast up mine eyes one looked on me, and asked
Of me, what thing it were? 'Indeed, sir,' I said,
'To see much and suffer more truly,' quoth I, 'is Do-well!'

'Haddst thou been patient,' he said 'sleeping though thou were,
Thou shouldest have known what Clergy knows and conceived more
through Reason;

For Reason would have rehearsed thee right as Clergy said,

But for thine intermeddling here art thou forsook;

Philosophus esses, si tacuisses.

Adam, while he spake not had paradise at will,
But when he chattered about meat and meddled to know
The wisdom and the knowledge of God he was put from bliss;
And right so did Reason by thee thou with rude speech
Blamed, and praised things that belonged not to be done;
Then had he no wish for to teach thee more.

'Pride and Presumption perchance, will thee call,
So that Clergy thy company cares not to follow.
Shall never challenging nor chiding chasten a man so soon
As shall Shame, and humble him and shape him to amend.
For let a drunken dolt in a ditch fall,
Let him lie, look not on him till it pleases him to rise;
For though Reason rebuked him then recketh he never,
Of Clergy nor of his council he counteth not a rush;
To blame or for to beat him then it were but pure sin.
But when Need pulleth him up for doubt lest he die,
And Shame scrapes his clothes and his shins washeth,
Then knows the drunken dolt wherefore he is to blame.'

'Ye say sooth,' quoth I 'I have seen it often,
There smites no thing so smart nor smelleth so sour,
As Shame, where he showeth himself for every man him shuns!
Why ye show me thus,' quoth I 'was for I rebuked Reason.'

'Truly,' quoth he, 'that is so' and prepared him to walk:
And I arose up right with that and followed him after,
And prayed him of his courtesy to tell me his name.

PASSUS XII

'I AM Imaginative,' quoth he 'idle was I never,
 Though I sit by myself in sickness or in health.
 I have followed thee in faith this five and forty winters,
 And many times have moved thee to think on thine end,
 And how many old years are gone and so few to come,
 And of thy wild wantonness when thou young were,
 To amend it in thy middle age lest strength thee failed
 In thine old age when hard it is to bear
 Poverty or penance or prayers make;

Si non in prima vigilia, nec in secunda, etc.

Amend thee while thou might thou hast been warned oft
 With attacks of pestilences with poverty and with troubles;
 And with these bitter rods God beateth his dear children,

Quem diligo, castigo.

And David in the psalter saith of such that loveth Jesus,

Virga tua et baculus tuus, ipsa me consolata sunt, etc.

Although thou strike me with thy staff with stick or with rod,
 It is but joy as for me to amend my soul.

And thou meddlest thee with verse-making and mightest go say
 thy psalter,

And pray for them that giveth thee bread for there are books
 enough

To tell men what Do-well is Do-better, and Do-best both,
 And preachers to prove what it is of many a pair of friars.'

I saw well he told me true and, somewhat me to excuse,
 Said, 'Cato comforted his son clerk though he were,
 To solace him sometimes as I do when I make verse;

Interpone tuis interdum gaudia curis, etc.

And of holy men I heard,' quoth I 'how they at times
 Played, the more perfect to be in many places.

But if there were any wight that would me tell
 What were Do-well and Do-better and Do-best finally,
 Would I never do work but go to holy church,
 And there say my beads except when I eat or sleep.'

'Paul in his epistle,' quoth he 'proveth what is Do-well;

Fides, spes, caritas; et major horum, etc.

Faith, hope, and charity and all be good,
And save men sundry times but none so soon as charity.
For he doth well without doubt that doth as loyalty teacheth;
That is, if thou be man married thy mate thou love,
And live forth as law wills while ye live both.

'Right so, if thou be a religious run thou never further
To Rome nor to Roquemadour ¹ but as thy rule teacheth;
And hold thee under obedience that highway is to heaven.

'And if thou be maiden as to marriage and may well continue so,
Seek thou never saint afar for soul's health.

For what made Lucifer to lose the high heaven,
Or Solomon his wisdom or Sampson his strength?
Job the Jew his joy dearly he it bought,
Aristotle and others more Hippocrates, and Virgil;
Alexander that all won miserably ended.
Wealth and their own wit was cumbrance to them all.

Felicia's ² fairness brought her all to shame;
And Rosamund right so unhappily used herself,
The beauty of her body in badness she dispensed.
Of many such I may read of men and of women,
That wise words would show and do the contrary,
Sunt homines nequam bene de virtute loquentes.

'And the rich right so gather and save,
And then men that they most hate spend it at the last;
And, for they permit and see so many needy folks,
And love them not as our Lord bid they lose their souls;

Date et dabitur vobis, etc.

So wealth and their own wit cumbreth full many;
Woe is him that them wieldeth unless he well dispenses them;

Scientes et non facientes variis flagellis vapulabunt;

Wisdom, saith the Book swelleth a man's soul,

Sapientia inflat, etc.;

And riches right so unless the roots be sound;
But grace is a herb thereof those ills to abate.
But grace groweth not but amongst the lowly;
Patience and poverty the place is there it groweth,
And in true-living men and in the life-holy.

¹ See page 205

² See page 205.

And through the gift of the Holy Ghost as the gospel telleth,
Spiritus ubi vult spirat, etc.

Clergy and Kind Wit¹ cometh of seeing and teaching,
 As the Book beareth witness to men that can read,
Quod scimus, loquimur; quod vidimus, testamur.

Of *quod scimus*, cometh Clergy learning of heaven,
 And of *quod vidimus* cometh Kind Wit and of seeing of divers people.
 But grace is a gift of God and of great love springeth;
 Knew never clerk how it cometh forth nor Kind Wit the ways,
Nescit aliquis unde venit, aut quo vadit, etc.

But yet Clergy is to be commended and Kind Wit both,
 And especially Clergy, for Christ's love that of Clergy is root.
 For Moses witnesseth that God wrote for to teach the people,
 In the old law, as the Scripture telleth that was the law of the Jews,
 That the woman who was in adultery taken were she rich or poor,
 With stones men should her strike and stone her to death.
 A woman, as we find was guilty of that deed,
 But Christ of his courtesy through Clergy her saved;
 For through the characters that Christ wrote the Jews knew themselves
 Guiltier as before God and greater in sin
 Than the woman that there was and went away for shame.
 The Clergy that there was succoured the woman.
 Holy Church knoweth this that Christ's writing saved;
 So Clergy is comfort to creatures that repent,
 And to cursed men mischief at their end

'For God's body might not be of bread, without Clergy,
 The which body is both health to the righteous,
 And death and damnation to them that die evil.
 As Christ's characters both comforted and culpable showed
 The woman that the Jews brought that Jesus intended to save;
Nolite judicare, et non judicabimini, etc.

Right so God's body, brethren unless it be worthily taken,
 Damneth us at the day of doom as the characters did the Jews.
 Therefore I counsel thee for Christ's sake Clergy that thou love,
 For Kind Wit is of his kin and near cousins both
 To our Lord, believe me therefore love them, I say;
 For both be as mirrors to amend our faults,
 And leaders for unlearned men and for the lettered both.

'Therefore attack thou never logic law, nor his customs,

¹ See page 205.

Nor contradict clerks I counsel thee for ever.
 For as a man may not see that lacketh his eyes,
 No more can a clerk unless he learnt it first through books.
 Although men made books God was the master
 And Holy Spirit the teacher and said what men should write.
 And right as sight serveth a man to see the high street,
 Right so leadeth letters unlearned men to Reason.
 And as a blind man in battle beareth weapon to fight,
 And hath no luck with his axe his enemy to hit,
 No more can a man of Kind Wit unless clerks him teach,
 Come for all his Kind Wit to Christendom and be saved;
 This is the coffer of Christ's treasure and clerks keep the keys,
 To unlock it at their liking and to the unlearned people
 Give mercy for their misdeeds if men it will ask
 Humbly and gently and pray it of grace.

'*Archa dei* in the old law Levites it kept;
 Had never unlearned man leave to lay hand on that chest,
 Only if he were priest or priest's son patriarch or prophet.

'Saul, for he sacrificed sorrow him befell,
 And his sons also for that sin came to harm,
 And many more other men that were not Levites,
 That with *archa dei* travelled in reverence and in worship,
 And laid hand thereon to lift it up and lost their life after.
 Therefore I counsel all creatures no Clergy to despise,
 Nor set little by their science whatever they do themselves.
 Take we their words for worth for their witness be true.
 And meddle we not much with them to move any wrath,
 Lest strife chafe us to chop each man the other;

Nolite tangere christos meos, etc.

'For Clergy is keeper under Christ of heaven;
 Was there never a knight but Clergy him made.
 But Kind Wit cometh of all kinds of seeing,
 Of birds and of beasts of tastes of truth, and of deceits.

'Men before us used to mark
 The wonders that they saw their sons for to teach,
 And held it a high science their ways to know.
 But through their science truly was never a soul saved,
 Nor brought by their books to bliss nor to joy;
 For all their knowing of nature comes but of diverse sights.

'Patriarchs and prophets reproved their science,
 And said, their words and their wisdom were but folly;

As to the Clergy of Christ they counted it but a trifle;

Sapientia hujus mundi, stultitia est apud Deum.

For the high Holy Ghost heaven shall cleave asunder,

And love shall leap out after into this low earth,

And cleanness shall seize it and clerks shall it find;

Pastores loquebantur ad invicem.

'He speaketh there of rich men right naught nor of right wise,

Nor of lords that were unlearned men but of the highest learned men,

Ibant magi ab oriente, etc.

If any friar were found there I give you five shillings;

Nor in no begger's cot was that child born,

But in a burgess's ¹ place of Bethlehem the best;

Sed non erat locus ei in diversorio; et pauper non habet diversorium.

'To shepherds and to poets appeared that angel,

And bade them go to Bethlehem God's birth to honour,

And sung a song of solace *Gloria in excelsis Deo!*

Rich men snored then and at their rest were,

When it shone on the shepherds a declarer of bliss.

'Clerks knew it well and came with their presents,

And did their homage honourably to him that was almighty,

Why I have told thee all this— I took full good heed

How thou contradicted Clergy with crabbed words,

"How that unlearned men more readily than lettered were saved,

Than clerks or clever men of Christian people."

'And thou said sooth of some but see in what manner:—

Take two strong men and in Thames cast them,

And both naked as a needle neither safer than the other,

The one hath knowledge and can swim and dive,

The other is ignorant of that labour learned never to swim;

Which thinkest thou of those two in Thames is in most dread?

He that never dived nor naught knows of swimming,

Or the swimmer that is safe if so himself pleases,

Where his fellow floats forth as the flood pleaseth,

And is in dread to drown that never did swim?"

'He that swim can not,' I said 'it seemeth to my wits.'

'Right so,' quoth the man 'reason it showeth,

That he that knoweth Clergy can sooner arise

Out of sin and be safe though he sin oft,

If he likes and pleases than ignorant person.

For if the clerk be wise he knoweth what is sin.

¹ See page 205.

'And right as Trajan the true knight dwelt not so deep in hell,
That our Lord had him not lightly out so believe I the thief be in heaven.
For he is in the lowest heaven if our belief be true,
And well at ease he lolleth there by the law of holy church,

Quia reddit uniuersique juxta opera sua, etc.

'And why that one thief on the cross yielded himself believer
Rather than that other thief though thou wouldst question,
All the clerks under Christ could not give the reason;

Quare placuit, quia voluit.

And so I sayest for thee that seekest after the whys,
And argued with Reason rebuking as it were,
And of the flowers in the wood and of their fair hues,
Whereof they catch their colours so clear and so bright,
And wishest of birds and of beasts and of their breeding to know,
Why some be low down and some aloft thy liking it were,
And of the stones and of the stars thou studieth, as I believe,
However beast or bird hath such strong wit;
Clergy nor Kind Wit knew never the cause,
But Kind knoweth the cause himself and no creature else.
He is the magpie's patron and putteth it in her ear,
That where the thorn is thickest to build and to breed;
And Kind taught the peacock to breed in such a way,
And taught Adam to know his private parts,
And taught him and Eve to cover them with leaves.

'Unlearned men many times masters they question,
Why Adam covered not first his mouth that eat the apple,
Rather than his body low down the unlearned ask thus the clerks;
Kind knoweth why he did so but no clerk else.
But of birds and beasts men of old time
Examples took and patterns as telleth these poets,
And that the fairest fowl foulest engendereth,
And feeblest fowl that flieth or swimmeth;
And that is the peacock and the peahen proud rich men they betoken
For the peacock, if men pursue him can not fly high;
For the trailing of his tail is he overtaken soon,
And his flesh is foul flesh and his feet too,
And unlovely of voice and hateful for to hear.

'Right so the rich if he his riches hoard,
And giveth it not till his death-day the tail of all sorrow.
Right as the quills of the peacock pain him in flight,
So is possession pain of pence and of nobles

To all that them holdeth till their tail be plucked.
 And though the rich repent then and bewail the time,
 That ever he gathered so greatly and gave thereof so little,
 Though he cry to Christ then with keen will, I believe
 His voice be in our Lord's ear like a magpie's chattering.
 And when his body shall come in cave to be buried,
 I believe it will pollute full foully the earth all about,
 And all the others where it lieth are envenomed through his poison.
 By the peacock's feet is understood as I have learned in Avianus,¹
 Executors, false friends that fulfil not his will
 That was written, and they were witnesses to do right as it laid down.
 Thus the poet proves that the peacock for his feathers is revered,
 Right so is the rich by reason of his goods.

'The lark, that is a lesser bird is more lovely of voice,
 And well away of wing swifter than the peacock,
 And of flesh, by many times fatter and sweeter.
 To lowly-living men the lark is compared;
 Aristotle the great clerk such tales he telleth;
 Thus he likens in his logic the least bird there is.
 And whether he be saved or not saved that truth knows no cleric,
 Not of Socrates nor of Solomon no writing can tell.
 But God is so good, I hope that since he gave them wits
 To teach us ways therewith (that teach us to be saved,
 And the better for their books) to pray we are beholden,
 That God for his grace give their souls rest;
 For lettered men were ignorant yet but for the learning of their books.'

'All these clerks,' quoth I then 'that on Christ believe,
 Say in their sermons that neither Saracens nor Jews,
 Nor no creature of Christ's likeness without christening is saved.'

'*Contra*,' quoth Imaginative then and began to frown,
 And said, '*Salvabitur vix justus in die judicii*.
Ergo salvabitur,' quoth he and said no more Latin.
 'Trajan was a true knight and took never christening,
 And he is safe, so saith the book and his soul in heaven.
 For there is baptism of water and baptism in blood-shedding,
 And through fire is baptism and that is firm belief;

Advenit ignis divinus, non comburens, sed illuminans, etc. "

'But truth that trespassed never transgressed not against his law,
 But liveth as his law teacheth and believeth there be no better,
 And if there were, he would amend and in such will dieth,

¹ See page 205.

Would never true God but recognized truth;
And whether it be or be not the strength is great of truth,
And a hope hanging therein to have reward for his truth.

For, *Deus dicitur quasi dans vitam aeternam suis, hoc est, fidelibus; et alibi:*

Si ambulavero in medio umbrae mortis, etc.

The gloss granteth upon that verse a great reward for truth.
And wit and wisdom,' quoth that wight 'was at some time a treasure,
To keep with a commonwealth no wealth was held better,
And much mirth and manhood' and right with that he vanished.

PASSUS XIII

AND I awaked therewith nearly out of my mind,
And as a fellow that free were forth began I to walk
In manner of a mendicant many a year after,
And of this dream many times much thought I had.
First, how Fortune me failed at my most need,
And how that Age menaced me should we ever meet;
And how that friars followed folk that were rich,
And folk that were poor at little price they set,
And no corpse in their churchyard nor in their church was buried,
Unless alive he bequeathed them aught or should help pay their debts.
And how this covetousness overcame clerks and priests,
And how that unlearned men be led unless our Lord them help
Through ignorant curates to incurable pains.
And how that Imaginative in dream me told,
Of Kind and of his cleverness and how courteous to beasts,
And how loving he is to beasts on land and on water;
Forsakes he no living thing less nor more;
The creatures that creep of Kind be engendered.
And then how Imaginative said *vix justus salvabitur*,
And when he had said so how suddenly he passed.

I lay down long in this thought and at last I slept,
And, as Christ willed, there came Conscience to comfort me that time,
And bade me come to his court with Clergy should I dine.
And as Conscience of Clergy spoke I came the more readily,
And there saw a master what man he was I knew not,
That low bowed and courteously to Scripture.
Conscience knew him well and welcomed him fair;
They washed and wiped and to the dinner.
But Patience in the palace stood in pilgrim's clothes,
And prayed meat for charity for a poor hermit.
Conscience called him in and courteously said,
'Welcome, wight, go and wash thou shalt sit soon.
This master was made sit as for the most worthy,
And then Clergy and Conscience and Patience came after.

Patience and I were put to be mates,
And sat by ourselves at a side table.

Conscience called for meat and then came Scripture,
And served them thus soon of sundry meats many,
Of Augustine, of Ambrose of all the four evangelists;

Edentes et bibentes quae apud eos sunt.

But this master nor his man no ordinary flesh eat,
But they eat food of more cost messes and soups;
Of that which men mis-won they made them well at ease.
But their sauce was over sour and unsavourly ground,
In a mortar, *post mortem* of many bitter pains,
Unless they sing for those souls and weep salt tears:

*Vos qui peccata hominum comeditis, nisi pro eis lacrimas et orationes
effunderitis, ea quae in deliciis comeditis, in tormentis evometis.*

Conscience full courteously then commanded Scripture
Before Patience bread to bring and me that was his mate.

He set a sour loaf before us and said, '*Agite poenitentiam,*'

And then drew us drink *diu perseverans*.

'As long,' quoth I, 'as I live and my body endures!'

'Here is proper service,' quoth Patience 'there fareth no prince better';

And then he brought us forth a mess of other meat of *miserere-mei-
Deus*;

And he brought us of *beati-quorum* of *beatus-vir*'s making,

Et-quorum-tecta-sunt peccata in a dish

Of secret shrift, *dixi* and *confitebor tibi*!

'Bring Patience some pittance' quietly quoth Conscience;

And then had Patience a pittance *pro-hac-orabit-ad-te-omnis-sanctus-in-
tempore-opportuno*;

And Conscience cheered us and told us merry tales,

Cor contritum et humiliatum, Deus, non despicies.

Patience was proud of that proper service,

And made him mirth with his meat but I mourned ever,

For this doctor on the high dais drank wine so fast;

Vae vobis qui potentes estis ad bibendum vinum!

He ate many sundry meats messes and puddings,

Tripes and wild boar and eggs fried with fat.

Then said I to myself so that Patience it heard,

'It is not four days since that this man before the dean of St Paul's,

Preached of penances that Paul the apostle suffered,

In fame et frigore and blows of scourges;

Ter caesus sum et a Judeis quinquies quadregenas, etc.

'But one word they skip over at each time that they preach,
That Paul in his epistle to all the people told;

Periculum est in falsis fratribus.

Holy writ bids men beware I will not write it here
In English, in case it should be repeated too often,
And grieve therewith good men but grammarians shall read;

Unus quisque a fratre se custodiat, quia, ut dicitur, periculum est in falsis fratribus.

'But I knew never man that as friar went before men in English
Take it for their text and tell it plainly.

They preach that penance is profitable to the soul
And what mischief and pain Christ for man suffered.
But this God's glutton,' quoth I 'with his great cheeks,
Hath no pity on us poor he performeth evil;
That he preacheth he doeth not,' to Patience I told,

And wished heartily with will full eager,
That dishes and platters before this same doctor,
Were molten lead in his maw and Mahomet¹ inside him!

'I shall demand of this jerry with his pot belly,
To tell me what penance is of which he preached readily.'—

Patience perceived what I thought and winked at me to be still,
And said, 'Thou shalt see thus soon when he may no more,
He shall have a penance in his paunch and puff at each word,
And then shall his guts grumble and he shall gape after;

For now he hath drunken so deep he will know soon,
And prove it by their Apocalypse and by the passion of Saint Advise,²
That neither bacon nor brawn boiled meat nor messes
Is neither fish nor flesh but food for a penitent.

And then shall he testify by the Trinity and take his fellow to witness,
What he found in a frail for a friar's living,

And unless the first line be lying believe never again!
And then is the time to take up and to ask this doctor

Of Do-well and of Do-better and if Do-best be any penance.'—

And I sat still, as Patience said thus soon this doctor,
As ruddy as a rose rubbed his cheeks,

Coughed and exclaimed and Conscience him heard,
And told him of a Trinity and towards us he looked.

'What is Do-well, sir doctor?' quoth I 'Is Do-well any penance?'

'Do-well?' quoth this doctor— and took the cup and drank—

'Do no evil to thy fellow Christian as lies in thy power.'

¹ See page 206.

² See page 206.

'By this day, sir doctor,' quoth I 'then be ye not in Do-well;
 For ye have harmed us two in that ye eat the pudding,
 Messes, and other meat and we no morsel had!
 And if ye fare so in your infirmary it is strange methinketh,
 Unless strife be where charity should be if young children dared
 complain!

I would exchange my penance with yours for I am following Do-well!'

Then Conscience courteously a gesture he made,
 And winked upon Patience to pray me to be still,
 And said himself, 'Sir doctor if it be your will,
 What is Do-well and Do-better? ye thinkers know.'

'Do-well,' quoth this doctor 'do as clerks teach,
 And Do-better is he that teacheth and travaileth to teach others,
 And Do-best doth himself so as he saith and preacheth:—

Qui facit et docuerit, magnus vocabitur in regno caelorum.'

'Now thou, Clergy,' quoth Conscience 'say what is Do-well.'

'I have seven sons,' he said 'serve in a castle,
 There the lord of life dwelleth to teach them what is Do-well;
 Till I see those seven and myself accord with them,
 I am unfitted,' quoth he 'to any wight to explain it.
 For one Piers the Plowman hath impugned us all,
 And set all sciences at nought save love alone,
 And no text taketh to maintain his cause,
 But *dilige Deum* and *Domine, quis habitabit, etc.*

And he saith that Do-well and Do-better are two absolutes,
 Which absolutes, with faith find out Do-best,
 Which shall save man's soul thus saith Piers the Plowman.'

'I can naught hereon,' quoth Conscience 'but I know well Piers;
 He will not against holy writ speak I dare well undertake;
 Then pass we over till Piers come and prove this in deed.
 Patience hath been in many places and perchance knoweth
 That no clerk can as Christ beareth witness;

Patientes vincunt, etc.'

'At your request,' quoth Patience then 'if no man displeases;
Disce,' quoth he, '*doce dilige inimicos.*

Disce, and Do-well *doce,* and Do-better;

Dilige, and Do-best thus taught me once

A beloved that I loved Love was her name.

"With words and with works," quoth she "and will of thine heart,

Thy soul love faithfully all thy life-time;

And so thou learn thee to love for the Lord's love of heaven,

Thine enemy in all ways treat as thyself.
 Cast coals on his head and all kind speeches,
 Both with works and with words try his love to win;
 And lay on him thus with love till he laugh on thee;
 Unless he bow to this beating blind may he be!
 But for to do thus with thy friend folly it were,
 For he that loveth thee truly little of thine coveteth.
 True love coveteth naught no goods but speech,
 With half a lamp-line ¹ in Latin *ex vi transitionis.*"

'I bear about herein fast bound, Do-well,
 In a sign of the Saturday that first set the calendar,
 And all the wit of the Wednesday of the next week after;
 The fullness of the moon is the might of both.
 And herewith am I welcome where I have it with me.' ²

'Undo it, let this doctor judge if Do-well be therein;
 For, by him that me made might never poverty,
 Pain, nor mischief nor man with his tongue,
 Cold, nor care nor company of thieves,
 Nor either heat, nor hail nor no hell's spirit,
 Nor either fire nor flood nor fear of thine enemy
 Trouble thee any time if thou take it with thee;

Caritas nihil timet.

And indeed, have God my soul! if thou wilt it crave,
 There is not either emperor nor empress earl, king, nor baron,
 Pope, nor patriarch that pure reason shall not make
 The master of all those men through might of this riddle;
 Not through witch-craft, but through it (if thou wish it thyself)
 Shall king and queen and all the commons after
 Give thee all that they may give as for the best guardian,
 And, as thou judgest, will they do all their days after;

Patientes vincunt, etc.'

'It is but a "Dido,"' quoth this doctor 'a popular tale.
 All the wit of this world and mighty men's strength
 Can not make a peace between the pope and his enemies,
 Nor between two Christian kings can no wight peace make,
 Profitable to either people' and pushed the table from him,
 And took Clergy and Conscience to council, as it were,
 So that Patience then must pass for pilgrims know well how to lie.

But Conscience spoke aloud and courteously said,
 'Friends, farewell' and fair spake to Clergy,

¹ See page 206.

² See page 206.

'For I will go with this man if God give me grace,
And be pilgrim with Patience till I have tried more men.'

'What?' quoth Clergy to Conscience 'are ye covetous now
After new year's gifts or presents or eager to read riddles?
I shall bring you a Bible a book of the old law,
And teach you, if you like the least point to know,
That Patience the pilgrim perfectly knew never.'

'Nay, by Christ,' quoth Conscience to Clergy 'God thee requite,
For all that Patience me proffers proud am I little.
But the will of the wight and the will of folk here
Hath moved my mind to mourn for my sins.
The good will of a wight was never bought to the full;
For there is no treasure comparable to a true will.
Had not Magdalen more for a box of salve,
Than Zacheus when he said *dimidium bonorum meorum do pauperibus*?
And the poor widow for a pair of mites,
Than all those that offered into *gazophilacium*?'

Thus courteously Conscience first took leave of the friar,
And then softly he said in Clergy's ear,
'I would rather, by our Lord if I live should,
Have patience perfectly than half thy pack of books!'
Clergy of Conscience no leave would take,
But said full soberly 'Thou shalt see the time,
When thou art weary for walking and glad of my counsel.'

'That is sooth,' said Conscience 'so me God help!
If Patience be our fellow and friend of us both,
There is no woe in this world that we should not amend,
And conform kings to peace and all people's lands,
Saracens and Syria and so all the Jews
Turn into the true faith and into one creed.'

'That is true,' quoth Clergy 'I see what thou meanest,
I shall dwell as I do my duty to show forth,
And train children and other folk teach,
Till Patience have proved thee and perfect thee made.'

Conscience then with Patience passed forth pilgrims as it were.
Then had Patience, as pilgrims have in his pouch victuals,
Sobriety, and simple speech and steadfast faith,
To comfort him and Conscience if they come in a place
Where unkindness and covetousness are hungry countries both.

And as they went by the way of Do-well they talked;
They met with a minstrel as me then thought.

Patience approached him first and prayed him he should tell
To Conscience, what craft he knew and to what country he went.

'I am a minstrel,' quoth that man 'my name is *Activa Vita*:
All idleness I hate for Active is my name.

A confectioner, would ye know and serve many lords,
And few robes I receive or furred gowns.

Could I lie to make men laugh then I should get
Either mantle or money amongst lords' minstrels.

But as I can neither play tabor nor trumpet nor tell no tales,
Pipe, nor fiddle at feasts, nor harp,

Joke nor juggle nor gently play.

Nor neither dance nor leap nor sing with the gittern,

I have no good gifts from these great lords,

For no bread that I bring save a benison on the Sunday,

When the priest tells the people their *pater noster* to pray

For Piers the Plowman and those that his profit serve.

And that am I, Active that idleness hates,

For all true toilers and tillers of the earth;

From Michaelmas to Michaelmas I supply them with wafers.

'Beggars and bidders of my bread crave,

Vagabonds and friars and folk with tonsures.

I find bread for the pope and provender for his palfrey,

And I have never of him have God my truth,

Neither provender nor parsonage yet of the pope's gift,

Save a pardon with a pease of lead with two heads amidst! ¹

Had I a clerk that could write I would send him a petition,

That he send me under his seal a salve for the pestilence,

And that his blessing and his bulls boils might destroy:

In nomine meo daemonia ejicient, et super aegros manus imponent, et bene habebunt.

And then would I be ready to the people pastry for to make,

And willing and busy about bread and drink

For him and for all his found I that his pardon

Might heal a man as I believe it should.

For since he hath the power that Peter himself had,

He hath the pot with the salve sothly, as me thinketh:

Argentum et aurum non est mihi; quod autem habeo, hoc tibi do nomine Domini, surge et ambula.

'But if might of miracle fails him it is because men be not worthy
To have the grace of God and no guilt of the pope.

¹ See page 206.

For may no blessing do us good unless we will amend,
No man's mass make peace amongst Christian people,
Till pride be completely destroyed and that through lack of bread.

'For ere I have bread of meal oft much I sweat.
And ere the commons have corn enough many a cold morning;
So, ere my wafers be made much woe I endure.

'All London, I believe liketh well my wafers,
And lower when they lack them— it is not long ago,
There were miserable commons when no cart came to town
With baked bread from Stratford¹ then began beggars to weep,
And workmen afraid enough this will be remembered long.
In the date of our drought in a dry April,
A thousand and three hundred twice thirty and ten,
My wafers then were scarce when Chichester was mayor.'

I took good notice, by Christ and Conscience too,
Of Haukyn the active man and how he was clothed.
He had a coat of Christendom as holy church believeth,
But it was marred in many places with many sundry patches,
Of pride here a patch, and there a patch of rude speech,
Of scorning and of scoffing and of discourteous bearing,
As in apparel and in comporting proudly amongst the people,
Otherwise than he is with heart or sight showing;
Willing that all men think he is what he is not.
For which he boasteth and braggeth with many bold oathes,
And unwilling to be reprov'd by any man living,
And so singular by himself in the sight of the people,
Was none such as himself nor none so pope-holy,²
Habited as a hermit an order all to himself,
Religion without rule and reasonable obedience;
Attacking lettered men and unlearned men both,
Praising true living and a liar in soul;
In thought and observation imagination and study,
As best for his body be and have a bad name;
And meddles he everywhere where he hath no business,
Wishing men to think his wit were the best,
Or his crafty skill or of clerks he the wisest,
Or strongest on steed sturdiest under girdle,
And loveliest to look on and truest in deeds,
And none so holy as he nor of life cleaner,
Or fairest of features of form and of stature,

¹ See page 206.

² See page 206.

And most skilled of song or cunning of hand,
 And generous to give and loss thereby to suffer;
 And if he giveth aught poor men tell what he dealt them;
 Poor in possessions in purse and in coffer,
 And as lion to look on and lordly of speech.
 Boldest of beggars a boaster that naught hath,
 In town and in tavern telling tales,
 And saying things that he never saw and for truth swearing it;
 Of deeds that he never did speaking and boasting,
 And of works that he well did to witness and say—
 'Lo! if ye believe me not or think that I lie,
 Ask him or him and he you can tell,
 What I suffered and saw and sometimes had,
 And what I could do and knew and what kin I come of.'
 All he wishes that men knew of his works and words,
 Which might please the people and praise himself:

Si hominibus placerem, Christi servus non essem;

Et alibi: nemo potest duobus dominis servire.

'By Christ,' quoth Conscience then 'thy best coat, Haukyn,
 Hath many stains and spots it must be washed.'

'Yea, whoso took heed,' quoth Haukyn 'behind and before,
 What is on back and what on front and by the two sides,
 Men would find many creases and many foul patches.'

And he turned about quickly and then I took heed,
 It was fouler many times than it first seemed.
 It was spotted with wrath and wicked will,
 With envy and evil speech provoking to fight,
 Lying and laughing and chiding with tongue;
 All that he knew wicked of any wight, he tells it,
 And blames men behind their back and wishes them misfortune;
 And what he knows of Will tells it to Wat,
 And the thing Wat heard Will heard after,
 And made of friends foes through a false tongue,
 'Either with might of mouth or through man's strength
 I avenge me many times or else fret myself
 Within, as a seamstress shears';— wretched man and cursed!

Cujus maledictione os plenum est, et amaritudine; sub lingua ejus labor et dolor:

Et alibi: filii hominum, dentes eorum arma et sagittae, et lingua eorum gladius acutus:—

'There is no man that I love lasts any time,

For tales that I tell no man trusteth me,
And when I may not have the mastery with melancholy I am seized,
So that I catch cramp heart spasms sometimes,
Or an ague in such an anger and sometimes a fever,
That holdeth me all a twelve month till that I despise
Leechcraft of our Lord and trust in a witch,
And say, that no clerk can cure me nor Christ, as I believe,
As the cobbler of Southwark or of Shoreditch Dame Emma!¹
And say, that no God's word did me never good,
But through a charm had I good luck and my chief healing!'

I looked more carefully and then saw it was soiled
With liking of lechery as by looking of his eye.
For each maid that he met he made her a sign
Seeming to sin-ward and sometimes began to taste
About the mouth, or beneath beginneth to grope,
Till either's will waxeth keen and to the work they go,
As well in fasting days and Fridays and forbidden nights;
And as well in Lent as out of Lent all times alike,
Such works with them be never out of season;
Till they might no more and then had merry tales,
And how that lechers love laugh and jest,
And of their harlotry and whoredom in their old age tell.

Then Patience perceived places of his coat
Were grimy through covetousness and unnatural desiring;
More to goods than to God the man his love gave,
And imagined how he them might have
With false measures and means and with false witness;
He gave for love of the interest and loth to do right,
And waited to see which way to beguile,
And mixed his merchandise and made a good show;—
'The worst within was clever I called it,
And if my neighbour had any hind or any beast else,
More profitable than mine many sleights I made,
How I might have it all my wit I cast,
And if I had it not by other ways at last I stole it,
Or secretly his purse shook unpicked his locks,
Or by night or by day about was I ever,
Through guile to gather the goods that I have.

'If I went to the plough I pinched so narrowly,
That a foot of land or a furrow steal I would,

¹ See page 206.

From my next neighbour take of his earth;
 And if I reaped, I would reach over or gave them orders that reaped,
 To seize to me with their sickles what I sowed never.

'And whoso borrowed of me rued the time,
 With presents privately or payed some amount.

So, willy nilly take I would;

And both to kith and kin I was mean with what I had.

'And whoso bargained for my goods abuse I would,
 Till he proffered to pay me a penny or two
 More than it was worth and yet would I swear,
 That it cost me much more and swore many oaths.

'On holy days at holy church when I heard Mass,
 Had I never will, knows God genuinely to beseech
 Mercy for my misdeeds I mourned more
 For loss of goods, believe me than for my body's guilts;
 Thus, if I had deadly sin done I dreaded not that so sore,
 As when I lent and believed it lost or it was long ere it was payed.
 So if I showed any kindness my fellow Christian to help,
 Upon a cruel covetousness my heart began to suffer.

And if I sent over sea my servants to Bruges,
 Or into Prussia my prentice my profit to look after,
 To deal with money and make exchanges,
 Might never me comfort in the mean time,
 Neither Mass nor matins nor no manner of sights,
 Nor never penance performed nor *pater noster* said,
 My mind was more on my goods, in the balance,
 Than on the grace of God and his great helps:

Ubi thesaurus tuus, ibi et cor tuum.'

And also the glutton with great oaths his garment had soiled,
 And foully muddled it with false speech;
 When no need was he took God's name in vain,
 Swore thereby very oft and all sweated his coat.
 And more meat eat and drank than nature could digest—
 'I caught sickness sometimes for my frequent surfeits;
 And then I dreaded to die in deadly sin'—
 So that into despair he fell and thought not to be saved,
 The which is sloth so strong that no skill can help it,
 Nor no mercy heal the man that so dieth.

Which be the ways that bringeth a man to sloth?

It happens when a man mourneth not for his misdeeds nor maketh no
 sorrow,

But the penance that the priest enjoineth performeth badly,
 Doth no alms-deeds dreads him of no sin,
 Liveth against the faith and no law holdeth;
 Each day is holiday with him or a high feast day;
 And if aught will hear it is a harlot's tongue.
 When men speak of Christ or of cleanness of soul,
 He waxeth wroth and will naught hear but words of mirth.
 Penance and poor men and the passion of saints
 He hateth to hear thereof and all that tell it.
 These be the ways, beware that bringeth a man to despair!
 Ye lords and ladies and legates of holy church,
 That feed wise fools flatterers and liars,
 And have liking to listen to them to make you laugh;

Vae vobis qui ridetis, etc.:

And give them meat and goods and poor men refuse,
 In your death-dying I dread me full sore,
 Lest those three kinds of men to much sorrow you bring:

Consentientes et agentes pari poena puniuntur.

Patriarchs and prophets and preachers of God's word
 Save through their sermons man's soul from hell;
 Right so flatterers and fools are the fiend's disciples,
 To entice men through their tales to sin and harlotry.
 But clerks that know holy writ should teach lords,
 What David saith of such men as the psalter telleth:

Non habitabit in medio domus meae, qui facit superbiam et qui loquitur iniqua.

Should no jester have audience in hall nor in chambers,
 Where wise men are God's word witnesseth;
 Nor no vain man amongst lords be allowed.

Clerks and knights welcome king's minstrels,
 And for love of the lord listen to them at feasts;
 Much more, methinketh rich men should
 Have beggars before them the which be God's minstrels,
 As he saith himself Saint John beareth witness:

Qui vos spernit, me spernit.

Therefore I say to you rich revels when ye make
 For to solace your souls such minstrels to have:
 The poor, not a wise fool sitting at the high table,
 And a learned man, to teach thee what our Lord suffered,
 For to save thy soul from Satan thine enemy,
 And fiddle to thee, without flattering of Good Friday the story;

And a blind man for a jester or a bed-ridden woman,
To cry for a largesse before our Lord your good fame to show!
These three kinds of minstrels make a man to laugh,
And, at his death-dying they give him great comfort,
That in his life listened to them and loved them here.
These solace the soul till he comes to
A well good hope, for he wrought so amongst true saints.
But flatterers and fools through their foul words,
Lead those that love them to Lucifer's feast,
With *turpiloquio*, a lay of sorrow and Lucifer's fiddle.

Thus Haukyn the active man had soiled his coat,
Till Conscience accused him thereof in a courteous manner
Why he had not washed it or cleaned it with a brush.

PASSUS XIV

'I HAVE but one whole garment,' quoth Haukyn 'I am the less to blame
Though it be soiled and seldom clean I sleep therein at nights;
And also I have a housewife servants and children—

Uxorem duxi, et ideo non possum venire—

That will bespot it many a time inspite of my checks!
It hath been washed in Lent and out of Lent both,
With the soap of sickness that seeketh out wondrous deep,
And with the loss of goods loth for to offend
God or any good man by aught that I could;
And was shriven by the priest that gave me, for my sins,
As penance patience and poor men to feed,
All for care of my Christianity in cleanness to keep it.
And could I never, by Christ keep it clean an hour,
That I soiled it not with looking or some idle speech,
Or through deed or through word or will of mine heart,
That I dirtied it not foul from morning till eve.'

'And I shall teach thee,' quoth Conscience 'of contrition to make,
That shall scrape thy coat of all kinds of filth,

Cordis contritio, etc.:—

Do-well shall wash it and wring it through a wise confessor,

Oris confessio, etc.:—

Do-better shall beat it and scour it as bright as any scarlet,
And dye it with good will and God's grace to amend thee,
And then send thee to satisfaction for to sew it after,

Satisfactio, Do-best.

Shall never fog besmirch it nor moth after bite it,
Nor fiend nor false man befoul it in thy life;
Shall no herald nor harper have a fairer garment
Than Haukyn the active man if thou do my teaching;
Nor no minstrel be valued more amongst poor and rich,
Than Haukyn's wife the waferer with his *activa vita*.'

'And I shall provide the paste,' quoth Patience 'though here is no
ploughing,

And flour to feed folk with as best be for the soul,
Though never grain grewed nor grape upon vine.

For all that liveth and looketh livelihood will I find,
 And enough shall none lack of things that they need.
 We should not be too busy about our livelihood,

*Ne solliciti sitis, etc.: volucres coeli Deus pascit, etc.: patientes vincunt,
 etc.'*

Then laughed Haukyn a little and lightly began to swear,
 'Whoso believeth you, by our Lord I believe he be not blessed!'
 'No,' quoth Patience patiently and out of his pouch took
 Food of great virtue for all manner of beasts,
 And said, 'Lo! here is livelihood enough if our belief be true!
 For lent never was life but livelihood was given,
 Whereof or wherefrom or whereby to live.

'First the wild worm under wet earth,
 Fish to live in the flood and the fire the cricket,
 The curlew by means of the air most cleanest flesh of birds,
 And beasts by grass and by grain and by green roots,
 Meaning that all men might the same way
 Live through true belief and love, as God witnesseth;

*Quodcunque petieritis a patre in nomine meo, etc.; et alibi,
 Non in solo pane vivit homo, sed in omni verbo, quod procedit de ore Dei.'*

I looked what livelihood it was that Patience so praised,
 And it was a piece of the *pater noster* *fiat voluntas tua*.

'Have, Haukyn!' quoth Patience 'and eat this when thee hungereth,
 Or when thou art benumbed with cold or pinest with thirst.
 Shall not gyves thee grieve nor great lords' wrath,
 Prison nor punishment for—*patientes vincunt*.

If thou be sober of sight and of tongue,
 In eating and in handling and in all thy five wits,
 Darest thou never care for corn nor linen cloth nor woollen,
 Nor for drink, nor death dread but die when God liketh,
 Through hunger or through heat at his will be it;
 For if thou livest after his law the shorter life the better
Si quis amat Christum mundum non diligit istum.

For through his breath beasts grow and go abroad,

Dixit et facta sunt, etc.:

Ergo through his breath must men and beasts live,
 As holy writ witnesseth when men say grace,

Aperis tu manum tuam, et imples omne animal benedictione

'It is found that forty winters folk lived without tilling,
 And out of the stone sprang the water that folk and beasts drank.
 And in Elijah's time heaven was closed,

That no rain rained thus read men in books,
That many winters men lived and no food won by tilling.
Seven slept, as saith the book seven hundred winters,
And lived without livelihood and at last they woke,
And if men lived according to measure should never more be fault
Amongst Christian creatures if Christ's words be true.
But unkindness *caristia* maketh amongst Christian people,
And over plenty maketh pride amongst poor and rich;
But measure is so much worth it cannot be too dear,
For the mischief and mischance amongst men of Sodom
Waxed through plenty of bread and of pure sloth;

Otiositas et abundantia panis peccatum turpissimum nutrit.

For they measured not of that they eat and drank,
Did deadly sin that the devil liked,
So vengeance fell upon them for their vile sins;
They sunk into hell those cities each one.
Therefore measure we us well and make our faith our strong shield,
And through faith cometh contrition conscience knows well,
Which driveth away deadly sin and makes it venial.
And though a man may not speak contrition may him save,
And bring his soul to bliss if so that faith beareth witness,
That, whilst he lived, he believed on the law of holy church;
Ergo contrition, faith, and conscience is truly Do-well,
And surgeons for deadly sins when shrift of mouth faileth.
‘But shrift of mouth more worthy is if man be inly contrite;
For shrift of mouth slayeth sin be it never so deadly;
Per confessionem to a priest *peccata occiduntur*,
Where contrition doth but drive it down into a venial sin,
As David saith in the psalter *et quorum tecta sunt peccata*.
But satisfaction seeketh out the root and both slayeth and maketh
void,

And, as it never had been to naught bringeth deadly sin,
So it never after is seen, nor hurts but seemeth a wound healed.'

‘Where dwelleth Charity?’ quoth Haukyn ‘I knew never in my life
Man that with him spake widely as I have travelled!’

‘Where perfect truth and poverty of heart is and patience of tongue,
There is Charity, the chief chamberlain for God himself!’

'Is patient poverty,' quoth Haukyn 'more pleasing to our Master
Than riches rightfully won and reasonably spent?'

'But *quis est ille?*' quoth Patience 'quick *laudabimus eum!*
Though men talk of riches right to the world's end,

I knew never man that rich was that when he reckon should,
 When it drew to his death-day did not dread him sore,
 And that at reckoning in arrears fell rather than out of debt.
 Where the poor dare plead and prove by pure reason,
 To have allowance of his Lord by the law he it claimeth,
 Joy that never joy had of righteous Judge he asketh,
 And saith, "Lo! birds and beasts that no bliss knoweth,
 And wild worms in woods through winters thou them grieveest,
 And makest them well nigh meek and mild for want,
 And after thou sendest them summer which is their sovereign joy,
 And bliss to all that be both wild and tame."
 Then may beggars, as beasts for good wait,
 That all their life have lived in suffering and want.
 Unless God sent them some time some manner of joy,
 Either here or elsewhere would it never be just;
 For to bad fortune was he wrought that never was for joy created.
 Angels that in hell now be had joy at some time,
 And Dives on dainties lived and in *douce vie*;
 Right so reason showeth that those men that were rich,
 And their mates also lived their life in mirth.

'But God is of a wondrous will as natural wit shows,
 To give many man his reward ere he it hath deserved.
 Right so doeth God by some rich a pity me it thinketh,
 For they have their hire here a heaven as it were,
 And great pleasure in living without labour of body;
 And when he dieth, be disallowed as David saith in the psalter,
Dormierunt, et nihil invenerunt;

And in another place also *velut somnium surgentium,*
Domine, in civitate tua, et ad nihilum rediges.

'Alas! that riches should deprive and rob man's soul
 From the love of our Lord at his last end!
 Labourers that have their hire in advance are evermore needy,
 And seldom dieth he out of debt that dines ere he deserve it,
 And till he have done his duty and his day's work.
 For when a workman hath wrought then may men see the truth,
 What he is worth for his work and what he hath deserved;
 And naught take before for dread of disapproval.
 So I say to you rich it beseemeth not that ye shall
 Have heaven in your life here and heaven hereafter;
 Right as a servant taketh his salary before and then would claim more,
 As he that none had and hath his hire at the last.

It may not be, ye rich men or Matthew on God lieth;

Vae! deliciis ad delicias difficile est transire.

'But if ye rich have pity and reward well the poor,
And live as law teacheth deal truly with all,
Christ of his courtesy shall comfort you at the last,
And reward all with double riches that pitiful hearts have.
And as a hind that had his hire ere he began,
And when he hath done his work well men give him more reward,
Giveth him a coat above his covenant right so Christ giveth heaven
Both to rich and to not rich that mercifully live;
And all that do their work well have double hire for their labours,
Here forgiveness of their sins and heaven's bliss hereafter.

'But it is but seldom seen as by holy saints' books,
That God rewarded double rest to any rich wight.
For much mirth is amongst the rich as to meat and clothing,
And much mirth in May is amongst wild beasts,
And so long as summer lasts the solace endureth.
But beggars about midsummer breadless they sup,
And it is in winter for them worse for wet-shod they go.
Athirst sore and ahungred and foul rebuked,
And berated by rich men so that pity it is to hear.
Now, Lord, send them summer and some manner of joy.
Heaven after their hence-going that here had such want!
For all mightest thou have made none meaner than another,
And equally clever and wise if thee well had liked.
And have pity on these rich men that reward not thy prisoners;
Of the good that thou them givest *ingrati* be many;
But, God, of thy goodness give them grace to amend.
For may no famine be to them hard drought, nor wet,
Nor neither heat nor hail if they have their health,
Of that they wish and want lacketh them not here.

'But poor people, thy prisoners Lord, in the pit of misfortune,
Comfort those creatures that much care suffer
Through famine, through drought all their days here,
Woe in winter time for wanting of clothes,
And in summer time seldom sup to the full;
Comfort thy sorrowful Christ, in thy kingdom,
For how thou comfortest all creatures clerks bear witness,

Convertimini ad me, et salvi eritis:

'Thus, in *genere* of his humanity Jesus Christ spoke,
To robbers and to thieves to rich and to poor.

Thou taughtest them in the Trinity to take baptism,
 And be clean through that christening from all kinds of sins;
 And if it happens through folly to fall into sin after,
 Confession, and acknowledgement and craving thy mercy
 Should amend us as many times as man can desire.
 But if the devil should plead against this and punish us in conscience,
 Christ would take the acquittal quickly and to the evil one show it,

Pateat, etc., per passionem Domini,

And repel so the devil and prove us to be under his pledge.
 But the parchment of this patent of poverty be most,
 And of pure patience and perfect faith.
 From pomp and from pride the parchment departs,
 And above all from all people unless they be poor of heart.
 Else is all idleness all that ever we wrote,
Pater nosters and penance and pilgrimages to Rome.
 Unless our alms-giving and spending spring of a true will,
 All our labour is lost lo! how men write
 On the windows at the friars vainly, if false be the foundation;
 Therefore Christians should be rich in common none covetous for
 himself.

‘For the seven sins that there be assail us ever,
 The fiend accompanies them all and gives them help,
 But with riches that villain chiefly men beguileth.
 For where that riches reign subservience followeth,
 And that is pleasant to pride in poor and in rich.
 And the rich is revered by reason of his riches,
 Where the poor is but behind and perchance knows more
 Of wit and of wisdom that far away is better
 Than riches or royalty and the rather heard in heaven.
 For the rich hath much to reckon and right soft walketh,
 The high way heavenwards oft riches closeth,

Ita impossibile diviti, etc.,

There the poor presses before the rich with a pack at his back,
Opera enim illorum sequuntur illos.

Importunes, as beggars do and boldly he demands,
 For his poverty and his patience a perpetual bliss;

Beati pauperes, quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum.

‘And Pride in riches reigneth rather than in poverty,
 Sooner in the master than in the man some dwelling he hath.
 But in poverty where patience is Pride hath no might,
 Nor none of the seven sins can stay there long,

Nor have power in poverty if patience it follows.

For the poor is always quick to please the rich,

And ready at his bidding for his bread's sake;

And obedience and boasting are ever at war,

And each hateth the other in all manner of works.

'If Wrath wrestle with the poor he hath the worse;

For if they both plead the poor is but feeble,

And if he chide or quarrel it turns out worst for him;

For lowly he looketh and lowly is his speech,

That meat or money of other men must ask.

'And if Gluttony grieve poverty he gains the less,

For his pay will not reach rich meats to buy;

And if his gluttony be to good ale he goeth to cold bed,

And his head uncovered uneasily awry;

For when he straineth him to stretch the straw is his sheets;

So for his gluttony and his great sloth he hath a grievous penance,

That is woe when he waketh and weepeth for cold,

And sometimes for his sins so he is never merry,

Without mourning amongst it and mishap as well.

'And if Covetousness would catch the poor they can not come
together,

And round the neck especially neither embrace the other.

For men knoweth well that Covetousness is of a keen will,

And hath hands and arms of a long length,

And poverty is but a little thing reaches not to his navel,

And good encounter was there never between the long and the short.

'And though Avarice would anger the poor he hath but little might,

For poverty hath but pouches to put his goods in,

Where Avarice hath aumbries and iron-bound coffers;

And which be easier to break open less noise it maketh,

A beggar's bag or an iron-bound coffer!

'Lechery loveth him not for he giveth but little silver,

Nor doth he not dine delicately nor drink wine oft.

A straw for the stews! they would stand not, I trow,

Had they nothing but from poor men their houses were un-tiled!

'And though Sloth pursue poverty and serves not God well,

Mischance is his master and maketh him to think,

That God is his greatest help and no one else,

And his servant, as he saith and of his train too.

And wherever he be he beareth the sign of poverty,

And in that company our Saviour saved all mankind.

Therefore all poor that patient are may claim and ask
 After their ending here bliss of heaven's kingdom.
 Much bolder may he ask that here could have his will
 In land and in lordship and pleasures of the body,
 And for God's love leaveth all and liveth as a beggar;
 And as a maid for man's love her mother forsaketh,
 Her father and all her friends and follows her mate,
 Much is such a maid to be loved by him that such a one taketh,
 More than a maiden is that is married through brokerage,
 As by assent of sundry parties and silver as well,
 More for covetousness of goods than human love between both:—
 So it fareth by each person that possessions forsaketh,
 And puts himself to be patient and poverty weddeth,
 The which is kin to God himself and to his saints.'
 'Have God my truth,' quoth Haukyn 'ye praise poverty hard;
 What is poverty with patience,' quoth he 'properly in meaning?'
 'Paupertas,' quoth Patience '*est odibile bonum,*

*Remotio curarum, possessio sine calumnia, donum Dei, sanitatis mater;
 Absque sollicitudine semita, sapientiae temperatrix, negotium sine
 damno;*

Incerta fortuna, absque sollicitudine felicitas.'

'I cannot construe all this,' quoth Haukyn 'ye must teach me this in
 English.'

'In English,' quoth Patience, 'it is hard well to expound it;
 But somewhat I shall say it so thou understand.

(1) Poverty is the first point that Pride most hateth,
 And it is good that by good skill terrifies Pride.

Right as contrition is a comforting thing conscience knows well,
 And a sorrow for himself and a solace to the soul,
 So poverty indeed penance, and joy,
 Is to the body pure spiritual health,

Ergo paupertas est odibile bonum,

And contrition comfort and *cura animarum.*

(2) Seldom sits poverty the truth to declare,
 Or as justice to judge men enjoined is no poor man,
 Nor to be a magistrate above men nor minister under kings;
 Seldom is any poor man put to punish any people;

Remotio curarum.

Ergo poverty and poor men perform the commandment,

Nolite judicare quemquam. The third:—

(3) Seldom becomes any poor man rich but of rightful heritage;

Winneth he naught with weights false nor with unsealed measures,
Nor borroweth of his neighbours except what he can pay back,

Possessio sine calumnia.

(4) The fourth is a fortune that makes the soul flourish
With sobriety from all sin and also yet more;
It restrains the flesh from follies full many,
And extra comfort Christ's own gift,

Donum Dei.

(5) The fifth is mother of health a friend in all temptations,
And for the land ever a healer a lover of all cleanness,

Sanitatis mater.

(6) The sixth is a path of peace yea, through the pass of Alton¹
Poverty might pass without peril of robbing,
For there that poverty passeth peace followeth after,
And ever the less that he beareth the braver he is of heart:
Therefore saith Seneca *paupertas est absque sollicitudine semita.*
And a brave man of heart amongst a gang of thieves;

Cantabit pauper coram latrone viator.

(7) The seventh is a well of wisdom and few words showeth,
For lords allow him little nor listen to his reason,
He tempereth the tongue truth-ward and no treasure coveteth;

Sapientiae temperatrix.

(8) The eighth is a loyal labourer and loth to take more
Than he may well deserve in summer or in winter,
And if he trades, he feels no loss if he charity gains;

Negotium sine damno.

(9) The ninth is sweet to the soul no sugar is sweeter;
For patience is bread for poverty himself,
And sobriety sweet drink and good doctor in sickness,
Thus taught me a lettered man for our Lord's love,
Saint Augustine, a blessed life without over concern,
For body and for soul *absque sollicitudine felicitas.*
Now God, that all good giveth grant his soul rest,
That thus first wrote to teach men what poverty meant!

'Alas!' quoth Haukyn the active man then 'that, after my christening
I had not been dead and buried for Do-well's sake!
So dangerous it is,' quoth Haukyn 'to live and to do sin.
Sin followeth us ever,' quoth he and sorrowful waxed,
And wept water with his eyes and bewailed the time,
That ever he did a deed that dear God displeased;

¹ See page 206.

Swooned and sobbed and sighed full oft,
That ever he had land or lordship less or more,
Or mastery over any man other than himself.
'I am not worthy, knows God,' quoth Haukyn 'to wear any clothes,
Neither shirt nor shoes save for shame one,
To cover my body,' quoth he and cried mercy fast,
And wept and wailed and therewith I awoke.

PASSUS XV

BUT after my waking it was wondrous long,
 Ere I could truly know what was Do-well.
 And so my wit waxed and waned till I a fool were,
 And some blamed my life approved it few,
 And held me as a wretch and loth to reverence
 Lords or ladies or any man else,
 As persons in fur with pendants of silver;
 To serjeants nor to such said not once,
 'God save you, lords!' nor bowed fair;
 So that folk held me a fool and in that folly I raved,
 Till Reason had pity on me and rocked me asleep,
 Till I saw, as it sorcery were a marvellous thing withal,
 One without tongue and teeth told me whither I should go,
 And whereof I came and of what kind I begged him at last,
 If he were Christ's creature for Christ's love to tell.

'I am Christ's creature,' quoth he 'and by Christians in many a place,
 In Christ's court known and of his kin a part.

'It is neither Peter the porter nor Paul with his falchion,
 That will forbid me the door knock I never so late.
 At midnight, at midday my voice is known,
 So that each creature of his court welcometh me fair.'

'What are ye called,' quoth I, 'in that court amongst Christian
 people?'

'The whiles I quicken the body,' quoth he 'called am I *Anima*;
 And when I will and would *Animus* I am named;
 And for that I think and know called am I *Mens*;
 And when I make moan to God *Memoria* is my name;
 And when I make judgements and do as truth teacheth,
 Then is *Ratio* my right name Reason in English;
 And when I feel what folk telleth my first name is *Sensus*,
 And that is wit and wisdom the well of all crafts;
 And when I challenge or challenge not permit or refuse,
 Then am I Conscience called God's clerk and his notary;
 And when I love loyally our Lord and all others,
 Then is Love my name and in Latin *Amor*;

And when I fly from the flesh and forsake the corpse,
 Then am I spirit speechless and *Spiritus* then I am called.
 Austin and Isidore each of them both
 Named me thus by name now thou may choose,
 How thou desirest to call me now thou knowest all my names.

Anima pro diversis actionibus diversa nomina sortitur: dum vivificat corpus, Anima est; dum vult, Animus est; dum scit, Mens est; dum recolit, Memoria est; dum judicat, Ratio est; dum sentit, Sensus est; dum amat, Amor est; dum negat vel consentit, Conscientia est; dum spirat, Spiritus est.'

'Ye be as a bishop,' quoth I jesting that time,
 'For bishops blessed they bear many names,
Praesul and *pontifex* and *metropolitanus*,
 And other names a heap *episcopus* and *pastor*.'
 'That is sooth,' said he 'now I see thy will!
 Thou would'st know and understand the cause of all their names,
 And of mine, if thou mightest methinketh by thy speech!'

'Yea, sir,' I said 'if so no man were grieved,
 All the sciences under sun all the subtle crafts
 I would I knew and understood by nature in my heart!'

'Then art thou imperfect,' quoth he 'and one of Pride's knights;
 For such a lust and liking Lucifer fell from heaven:

Ponam pedem meum in aquilone, et similis ero altissimo.

It is against nature,' quoth he 'and all kind of reason,
 That any creature should know all except Christ alone.
 Against such Solomon speaketh and despiseth their wits,

And saith, *sicut qui mel comedit multum, non est ei bonum: sic qui scrutator est majestatis, opprimitur a gloria.*

To English men this means that may speak and hear,
 The man that much honey eateth his maw it cloyeth;
 And the more that a man of good matter heareth,
 Unless he do thereafter it doth him double harm:
Beatus est, saith Saint Bernard *qui scripturas legit*,
Et verba vertit in opera fully to his power.

Covetousness to understand and to know science
 Pulled out of paradise Adam and Eve;

Scientiae appetitus hominem immortalitatis gloria spoliavit.

And right as honey is evil to digest and cloyeth the maw,
 Right so those that through reason would the root know
 Of God and of his great mights his graces it hindereth.

¹ See page 206.

For in the liking lieth a pride and a covetousness of the body,
Against Christ's counsel and all clerks' teaching,

'That is, *non plus sapere quam oportet sapere*.

Friars and many other masters that to ignorant men preach,
Ye touch on matters immeasurable to tell of the Trinity,
So that oft times the unlearned people of their faith doubt.
Better if abandoned many doctors such teaching,
And told men of the ten commandments and touched on the seven sins,
And of the branches that burgeoneth from them and bring men to hell,
And how that folk in follies mispend their five wits,
As well friars as other folk foolishly spend
In housing, in clothing and high learning to show,
More for pomp than for pure charity the people know the truth
That I lie not, lo! for lords ye please,
And reverence the rich the rather for their silver;

Confundantur omnes qui adorant sculptilia; et alibi:

Ut quid diligitis vanitatem, et quaeritis mendacium?

Go to the gloss of the verse ye great clerks;
If I lie on you in my ignorant wit lead me to burning!
For as it seemeth, ye forsake no man's alms,
Of usurers, of whores of avaricious chapmen,
And bow to these lords that may lend you nobles,
Against your rule and religion I take record by Jesus,
That said to his disciples *ne sitis personarum acceptores*.

'Of this matter I might make a long book,
But of curates of Christian people as clerks bear witness,
I shall tell it for truth's sake take heed whoso liketh!
As holiness and honesty out from holy church spread
Through loyal living men that God's law teach,
Right so out from holy church all evils spread,
Where imperfect priesthood is preachers and teachers.
And see it by example in summer time on trees,
Where some boughs be leaved and some beareth none;
There is a mischief in the root of such manner boughs.
Right so parsons and priests and preachers of holy church,
That are root of the right faith to rule the people;
But where the root is rotten reason knows the truth,
Shall never flower nor fruit nor fair leaf be green.
Therefore, would ye lettered leave the lechery of clothing,
And be kind, as befits clerks and courteous with Christ's goods,
True of your tongue and of your tally both,

And hate to hear harlotry and not to receive
 Tithes of untrue thing tilled or chaffered,
 Then loth were unlearned men unless they your lore followed,
 And amend them that misdo more for your examples,
 Than for to preach and practise not hypocrisy that seemeth.
 For hypocrisy in Latin is likened to a dunghill,
 That was covered with snow and snakes within;
 Or to a wall that was white-limed and was foul within.
 Right so many priests preachers and prelates,
 Ye are blanched with *belles paroles* and with clothes also,
 But your works and your words thereunder are full unlovely.

'*Johannes Chrysostomus*¹ of clerks speaketh and priests,
*Sicut de templo omne bonum progreditur, sic de templo omne malum
 procedit.*

*Si sacerdotium integrum fuerit, tota floret ecclesia; si autem corruptum
 fuerit, omnis fides marcida est.*

*Si sacerdotium fuerit in peccatis, totus populus convertitur ad peccandum.
 Sicut cum videris arborem pallidam et marcidam, intelligis quod vitium
 habet in radice,*

*Ita cum videris populum indisciplinatum et irreligiosum, sine dubio
 sacerdotium ejus non est sanum.*

'If unlearned men wist what this Latin meaneth,
 And who was my authority much wonder methinketh,
 Unless many a priest bore instead of their daggers and their brooches,
 A set of beads² in their hand and a book under their arm.
 Sir John and Sir Geoffrey³ have a girdle of silver,
 A dagger, or a knife with studs guilded.
 But a breviary that should be his plow *placebo* to say,
 Had he never a service to save silver by saith it with evil will!
 Alas! ye ignorant men much lose ye by priests,
 But a thing that wickedly is won and with false sleights,
 Was never wisdom of wise God save wicked men it had;
 The which are priests imperfect and preachers after silver,
 Executors and subdeans summoners and their lovers.
 This which with guile was got ungraciously is spended;
 So harlots and whores are helped with such goods,
 And God's folk for lack thereof ruined and destroyed.

'Curates of holy church as clerks that be avaricious,
 Lightly what they leave rascals it have,
 Or die intestate and then the bishop entereth,

¹ See page 206.

² See page 206.

See page 206.

And maketh merry therewith and his men both,
 And say, "he was a niggard that no goods might spare
 To friend nor to stranger the fiend have his soul!
 For a wretched house he held all his life time;
 And what he spared and locked up spend we with mirth."
 For learned, for unlearned that loth is to spend,
 Thus go their goods when the spirit is fled.
 But for good men, God wot great dole men make,
 And bemoan good meat-givers and in mind have,
 In prayers and in penances and in perfect charity.'

'What is Charity?' quoth I then 'a childlike thing,' he said;
'Nisi efficiamini sicut parvuli, non intrabitis in regnum caelorum;
 Without childishness or folly a free liberal will.'

'Where should men find such a friend with so free a heart?
 I have lived in the land,' quoth I 'my name is Long Will,¹
 And found I never full charity before nor behind!
 Men be merciful to mendicants and to poor,
 And will lend where they believe honestly to be payed.

'But charity that Paul praiseth best and most pleasant to our Saviour,
As, non inflatur, non est ambitiosa, non quaerit quae sua sunt,

I saw never such a man so me God help,
 That would not ask after his own and other whiles covet
 Things that he needed not and take if he might!

Clerks teach me that Christ is in all places;
 But I saw him never truly but as myself in a mirror,

Ita in aenigmate, tunc facie ad faciem.

And so I trow truly by what men telleth of charity,
 It is not champions' contest nor trade, as I think.'

'Charity,' quoth he, 'chaffereth not nor challengeth, nor craveth.

As proud of a penny as of a pound of gold,

And is as glad of a gown of a gray wool

As of a tunic of Tharsian silk or of choice scarlet.

He is glad with all the glad and good to all wicked,

And believeth and loveth all that our Lord made.

Curseth he no creature nor can he bear wrath,

Nor no liking hath to lie nor laugh men to scorn.

All that men saith, he holds it true and in peace taketh,

And all manner of mischiefs in mildness he suffereth;

Coveteth he no earthly good but bliss of heaven's kingdom.'

'Hath he any rents or riches or any rich friends?'

¹ See page 206.

'Of rents nor of riches recketh he never.
 For a friend findeth him that faileth him never at need;
Fiat-voluntas-tua finds him evermore.
 And if he supbeth, he eats but a sop of *spera-in-Deo*.
 He can portray well the *pater noster* and paint it with *aves*,
 And otherwhiles is his wont to wend in pilgrimage,
 Where poor men and prisoners lie their pardon to have.
 Though he bear them no bread he beareth them sweeter livelihood,
 Loveth them as our Lord biddeth and looketh how they fare.

'And when he is weary of that work then will he sometimes
 Labour in a laundry well the length of a mile,
 And go to youth and eagerly address
 Pride with all its appurtenances and pack them together,
 And soak them in his breast and beat them clean,
 And labour on them long with *laboravi-in-gemitu-meo*,
 And with warm water at his eyes wash them after.
 And then he singeth when he doth so and sometimes saith weeping,
Cor contritum et humiliatum, Deus, non despicias.'

'By Christ, I would that I knew him,' quoth I 'no creature rather!'
 'Without help of Piers Plowman,' quoth he 'his person seest thou never.'
 'Do clerks know him,' quoth I 'that keep holy church?'

'Clerks have no knowing,' quoth he 'but by works and by words.
 But Piers the Plowman perceiveth more deeper
 What is the will and wherefore that many wights suffer,
Et vidit Deus cogitationes eorum.

For there are full proud-hearted men patient of tongue,
 And polite as of bearing to burgesses and to lords,
 And to poor people have pepper in the nose,
 And as a lion he looketh where men blame their works.

'For there are beggars and bidders beadsmen as it were,
 Looketh as lambs and seem life-holy,
 But it is more to have their meat with such an easy manner,
 Than for penance and perfectness the poverty that such have.
 Therefore by sight nor by clergy know shalt thou him never,
 Neither through words nor works but through will alone.
 And that knoweth no clerk nor creature on earth,
 But Piers the Plowman *Petrus, id est, Christus.*
 For he is not among rascals nor vagabond hermits,
 Nor among anchorites, where a box hangeth¹ all such they deceive.
 Fie on deceivers and *in fautores suos!*

¹ See page 206.

For charity is God's champion and as a good child mild,
 And the merriest of mouth at meat where he sitteth.
 The love that lieth in his heart maketh him light of speech,
 And is companionable and cheerful as Christ himself bids,

Nolite fieri sicut hypocritae, tristes, etc.

For I have seen him in silk and sometimes in russet,
 Both in grey and in fur and in gilt armour,
 And as gladly he gave to people that needed.
 Edmund and Edward both were kings,¹
 And saints considered when charity them followed.
 I have seen charity also sing and read,
 Ride and run in ragged weeds,
 But bidding as beggars beheld I him never.
 But in rich robes soonest he walketh,
 Capped and annointed and his crown shaved,
 And cleanly clothed in lawn and in silk of Tartary.
 And in a friar's frock he was found once,
 But it is far ago in Saint Francis' time;
 In that sect since too seldom hath he been known.
 Rich men he recommendeth and of their robes taketh,
 That without guile lead their lives,

Beatus est dives, qui, etc.

In king's court he cometh oft where the counsel is true,
 But if covetousness be of the counsel he will not come therein.
 In court among jesters he cometh but seldom,
 For brawling and back-biting and bearing of false witness.
 In the consistory before the commissary he cometh not full oft,
 For their law lasteth over-long unless they take silver;
 And matrimony for money make and unmake,
 And what Conscience and Christ have knit fast,
 They undo it unworthily those doctors of law.
 Amongst archbishops and other bishops and prelates of holy church,
 To dwell among them his wont was some time,
 And Christ's patrimony to the poor deal out in portions.
 But Avarice hath the keys now and keepeth for his kinsmen,
 And for his executors and his servants and some for their children.
 'But I blame no man but Lord, amend us all,
 And give us grace, good God charity to follow!
 For whoso might meet with him such manners him pleaseth,
 Neither he blameth nor curseth boasteth, nor praiseth,

¹ See page 206.

Taketh, nor loseth nor looketh stern;
Craveth, nor coveteth nor crieth after more,

In pace in idipsum dormiam, etc.

The most livelihood that he liveth by is love of God's passion,
Neither he asketh, nor beggeth nor borroweth to repay;
Misdoth he no man nor with his mouth grieveth.

'Amongst Christian men this mildness should last;
In all manner of trials have this at heart—
That though they suffered all this God suffered for us more,
In example we should do so and take no vengeance
On our foes that do us falseness that is our Father's will.
For well may every man know if God had willed himself,
Should never Judas nor Jew have Jesu put on rood,
Nor have martyred Peter nor Paul nor in prison held.
But he suffered in example that we should suffer also,
And said to such that suffer would that *patientes vincunt*.

'*Verbi gratia*,' quoth he 'and true examples many,
In *Legenda Sanctorum* the life of holy saints,
What penance and poverty and passion they suffered,
In hunger, in heat in all manner of trials.
Anthony and Giles ¹ and other holy fathers
Wonned in wilderness amongst wild beasts;
Monks and mendicants men by themselves,
In caves and in caverns seldom speak together.
But neither Anthony nor Giles nor hermit that time
Of lions nor of leopards livelihood took,
But of fowls that fly thus find men in books.
Except that Giles after a hind cried,
And through the milk of that mild beast the man was sustained;
And day by day had he her not his hunger for to slake,
But seldom and sundry times as saith the book and teacheth.

'Anthony some days about noon-time,
Had a bird that brought him bread that he lived by;
And though the man had a guest God found for them both.

'Paul *primus heremita* ² had enclosed himself,
So that no man might him see for moss and for leaves;
Fowls him fed many winters withal,
Till he founded friars of Austin's order.
Paul, after his preaching baskets he made,
And won with his hands what his belly needed.

¹ See page 207.

² See page 207.

Peter fished for his food and his fellow Andrew;
 Some they sold and some they cooked and so they lived both.
 And also Mary Magdalen by roots lived and dews,
 But most through devotion and thought of God almighty.
 I could not these seven days say them all,
 That lived thus for our Lord's love many long years.
 But there was not lion nor leopard that on land went,
 Neither bear, nor boar nor other beast wild,
 That fell not at their feet and fawned with their tails.
 And if they could have talked by Christ, as I trow,
 They would have fed that folk before wild fowls.
 For all the courtesy that beasts know they showed that folk oft
 In pleasing and in reverencing where they on land went.
 But God sent them food by fowls and by no fierce beasts,
 In meaning that meek things mild things should feed;
 As who saith, religious righteous men should support,
 And lawful men to life-holy men livelihood bring.
 And then would lords and ladies be loth to offend,
 And to take of their tenants more than truth wills,
 If they found that friars would forsake their alms,
 And tell them to bear it whence it was borrowed.
 For we be God's fowls and abide always,
 Till birds bring us what we should live by.
 For had ye soup and bread enough and penny ale to drink,
 And a dish there-midst of some manner of sort,
 Ye had right enough, ye religious and so your rule me told:

*Nunquam, dicit Job, rugit onager cum herbam habuerit? aut mugiet bos
 cum ante plenum praesepe steterit?*

*Brutorum animalium natura te condemnat, qui cum eis pabulum com-
 mune sufficiat; ex adipe prodiit iniquitas tua.*

'If unlearned men knew this Latin they would look to whom they give,
 And considered before five days or six,
 Ere they amortized to monks or canons their rents.
 Alas! lords and ladies ignorant counsel have ye
 To give from your heirs what your forefathers you left,¹
 And give to pray for you to such as be rich,
 And be founded and endowed even to pray for others.
 Who performeth this prophecy of the people that now live,

Dispersit, dedit pauperibus, etc.?

If any people perform that text it is these poor friars!

¹ See page 207.

For what they beg around in building they spend,
 And on themselves some and such as be their labourers,
 And from them that have they take and give them that have not.

‘But clerks and knights and commoners that be rich,
 Many of you fareth as if I a forest had,
 That were full of fair trees and I considered and thought
 How I might more therein amongst them set.
 Right so, ye rich ye robbeth those that be rich,
 To help them that help you and give where no need is.
 As whoso filled a cask from a fresh river,
 And went forth with that water to wet with the Thames.
 Right so, ye rich ye robbeth and feedeth
 Them that have as ye have them ye make at ease.
 ‘But religious that rich be should rather feast beggars
 Than burghesses that rich be as the book teacheth;

Quia sacrilegium est res pauperum non pauperibus dare.

Item: peccatoribus dare, est daemonibus immolare.

*Item: monache, si indiges et accipis, potius das quam accipis;
 si autem non eges, et accipis, rapis.*

Porro non indiget monachus, si habeat quod naturae sufficit.

Therefore I counsel all Christians to conform them to charity;
 For charity without demanding unchargeth the soul,
 And many a prisoner from purgatory through his prayers he delivereth.
 But there is a fault in the folk that the faith keep;
 Wherefore folk are the feeblere and not firm of belief.
 As in counterfeit is an evil alloy and yet looketh it like sterling,
 The mark of that money is good but the metal is feeble;
 So it fareth by some folk now they have fair speech,
 Crown and christening the king’s mark of heaven,
 But the metal, that is man’s soul with sin is foul alloyed;
 Both lettered and unlearned be now alloyed with sin,
 That no man loveth the other nor our Lord, as it seemeth.
 For through war and wicked works and weathers unreasonable,
 Weather-wise shipmen and wise clerks also
 Have no belief in the sky nor the lore of philosophers.
 ‘Astronomers all days in their art fail,
 That whilom warned before what should befall after.
 Shipmen and shepherds that with ship and sheep went,
 Wist by the welkin what should betide;
 As of weathers and winds they warned men oft.
 Tillers that tilled the earth told their masters,

By the seed that they sowed what they sell might,
 And what to lend and what to live by the land was so true.
 Now faileth the folk of the flood and of the land both,
 Shepherds and shipmen and so do these tillers;
 Neither they see nor know one course before another.
 Astronomers also are at their wits' end;
 Of that was calculated by the elements the contrary they find.
 Grammar, the ground of all beguileth now children;
 There is none of these new clerks whoso taketh heed,
 That can versify fair nor formally write;
 Nor not one among a hundred that an author can construe,
 Nor read a letter in any language but in Latin or in English.
 Go now to any degree and unless Guile be master,
 And Flatterer his fellow under him to work,
 Much wonder methinketh amongst us all.
 Doctors of decrees and of divinity masters,
 That should learn and know all kinds of knowledge,
 And answers to arguments and also to a *quodlibet* ¹
 (I dare not say it for shame) if such were opposed,
 They would fail in their philosophy and in physic both.
 Wherefore I am afeared of folk of holy church,
 Lest they skip over as others do in offices and in hours; ²
 But if they skip over, as I hope not our belief sufficeth;
 As clerks at Corpus Christi feast sing and read,
 That *sola fides sufficit* to save with unlearned people.
 'And so may Saracens be saved scribes and Jews;
 Alas then! that our law-givers might live as they teach us,
 And, for their living, that unlearned men be more loth God to offend.
 For Saracens have somewhat similar to our belief,
 For they love and believe on one person Almighty;
 And we, learned and ignorant on one God believe.
 But one Mahomet, a man into mis-belief
 Brought Saracens of Syria and see in what manner.
 This Mahomet was a Christian man and because he might not be a
 pope, ³

Into Syria he sought and through his subtle wits
 Tamed a dove and day and night her fed;
 The corn that she cropped he cast it in his ear.
 And if he among the people preached or in places came,
 Then would the dove come to the clerk's ear,

¹ See page 207.² See page 207.³ See page 207.

In meaning after meat thus Mahomet her enchanted,
 And made folk then fall on knees for he swore in his preaching
 That the dove that came so came from God of heaven
 As messenger to Mahomet men for to teach
 And thus through wiles of his wit and a white dove,
 Mahomet in mis-belief men and women brought,
 So that learned there and unlearned too live in his laws,
 And so our Saviour suffered the Saracens thus beguiled,
 Through a Christian clerk accursed in his soul;
 But for dread of the death I dare not tell truth,
 How English clerks a dove feed that Covetousness is called,
 And follow Mahomet's custom so that no man useth truth.

'Anchorites and hermits and monks and friars
 Resemble apostles through their perfect living.
 Would never the faithful father that his ministers should
 Of tyrants that plague true men take any alms,
 But do as Anthony did Dominic and Francis,
 Benet and Bernard the which them first taught
 To live by little and in low houses by true men's alms,
 Grace should grow and be green through their good living,
 And folk should find that be in divers sickness,
 The better for their praying in body and in soul.
 Their prayers and their penances to peace should bring
 All that be at strife if beadsmen were true;

Petite et accipietis, etc.

Salt saveth cattle say the wives;

Vos estis sal terrae, etc.

The heads of holy church if they holy were,
 Christ calleth them salt for Christian souls;

Et si sal evanuerit, in quo salietur.

But fresh flesh or fish when it salt lacketh,
 It is unsavoury, indeed seethed or baked.
 So is man's soul sothly that seeth no good example
 From them of holy church that the high way should teach,
 And be guide, and go before as a good standard-bearer,
 And encourage them that behind be and give them good proof.

'Eleven holy men all the world turned
 Into true belief the more methinketh,
 Should all manner of men we have so many masters,
 Priests and preachers and a pope above,
 Who God's salt should be to save man's soul.

'All was heathenness some time England and Wales,
Till Gregory sent clerks to come here and preach.
Austin at Canterbury christened the king,
And through miracles, as men may read all that march he turned
To Christ and to Christendom and cross to honour,
And baptized folk fast and the faith taught
More through miracles than through much preaching,
As well through his works as with holy words,
And told them what baptism and faith was in meaning.

'Cloth that cometh from the weaving is not comely to wear,
Till it is fulled under foot or on fulling-stocks,
Washed well with water and with teasles scratched,
Tucked, and tented and put under tailor's hand.
And so it fareth by a child that born is of womb,
Till it be christened in Christ's name confirmed by the bishop,
It is heathen as to heavenward and helpless in the soul.

'Heathen means after heath and untilled earth;
As in wild wilderness waxeth wild beasts,
Rude and irrational running without cruppers.

'Ye mind well how Matthew saith how a man made a feast;
He fed them with no venison nor pheasants baked,
But fowls that went not from him but followed his whistling;

Ecce altilia mea et omnia parata sunt, etc.;

And with calves' flesh he fed the fold that he loved.
The calf betokeneth cleanness in them that keep laws.
For as the cow with her milk the calf nourisheth to an ox,
So love and loyalty true men sustaineth,
And maidens and mild men mercy desire;
Right as the cow-calf coveteth sweet milk,
So do righteous men mercy and truth.
And by the hand-fed fowls this folk understand,
That loth be to love without teaching of examples.
Right as poultry in a courtyard come to men's whistling,
In search of meat follow men that whistle,
Right so uncouth men that little reason know,
Love and believe by lettered men's doings,
And by their words and their works think and trow.
And, as those fowls to find food after whistling,
So hope they to have heaven through their whistling.
And by the man that made the feast the majesty is signified;
That is, God of his grace giveth all men bliss;

With weathers and with wonders he warneth us with a whistler,
Where that his will is to worship us all,
And feed us and feast us for evermore together.

‘But who be that excuseth they are parsons and priests,
That heads of holy church be that have their will here,
Without toil, the tithe wield that true men work for,
They will be wroth that I write thus but to witness I take
Both Matthew and Mark and *memento Domini David*;

Ecce audivimus eam in Ephrata, etc.

What pope or prelate now performeth what Christ said,

Ite in universum mundum et praedicate, etc.?

‘Alas! that men so long on Mohamet should believe,
So many prelates to preach as the pope maketh,
Of Nazareth, of Nineveh of Nephthali, and Damascus,¹
That they go not as Christ teacheth since they wish for their titles,
To be pastors and preach the passion of Jesus,
And as himself said so to live and die;

Bonus pastor animam suam ponit, etc.;

And said for salvation of Saracens and others.

For Christians and unchristened Christ said to preachers

Ite vos in vineam meam.

And since that these Saracens scribes, and Jews
Have a bit of our belief the more, methinketh,
They would turn, whoso travail would to teach them of the Trinity,

Quaerite et invenietis, etc.

‘It is ruth to read how righteous men lived,
How they defouled their flesh forsook their own will,
Far from kith and from kin evil-clothed went,
Badly bedded no book but conscience,
Nor no riches but the rood to rejoice them in;

Absit nobis gloriari, nisi in cruce Domini nostri, etc.

‘And then was plenty and peace amongst poor and rich;
And now is ruth to read how the red noble
Is revered over rood received for the worthier
Than Christ’s cross, that overcame death and deadly sin!
And now is war and woe and whoso “why” asketh,
It is covetousness after that cross the crown shows in gold.
Both rich and religious that rood they honour,
That on groats is engraven and on gold nobles.
For covetousness of that cross men of holy church

¹ See page 207.

Shall turn as Templars ¹ did the time approacheth fast.
 Know ye not, wise men how those men honoured
 More treasure than truth? I dare not tell the soth;
 Reason and rightful judgement those religious judge.
 Right so, ye clerks for your covetousness, ere long,
 Shall they judge *dos ecclesiae* and your pride depose;

Deposuit potentes de sede, etc.

If knighthood and kind wit and common conscience
 Together love loyally believe it well, ye bishops,
 The lordship of lands for ever shall ye lose,
 And live as *Levitici* as our Lord you teacheth,

Per primitias et decimas.

'When Constantine of courtesy holy church endowed
 With lands and subjects lordships and rents,
 An angel me heard on high at Rome cry,
 "*Dos ecclesiae* this day hath drunk venom,
 And those that have Peter's power are poisoned all."
 A medicine must be thereto that may amend prelates,
 That should pray for the peace possession them hindereth,
 Take their lands, ye lords and let them live by tithes.
 If possession be poison and imperfect men make,
 Good it were to discharge them for holy church's sake,
 And purge them of poison ere more peril fall.

'If priesthood were perfect the people would amend,
 That cross Christ's law and Christendom despise.
 For all paynims pray and perfectly believe
 On the holy great God and his grace they ask,
 And make their moan to Mahomet their message to offer.
 And thus in a faith liveth that folk and by a false mediator,
 And that is pity for righteous men that in the realm live,
 And a peril to the pope and prelates that he maketh,
 That bear bishop's names of Bethlehem and Babylon;
 When the high king of heaven sent his son to earth,
 Many miracles he wrought man to convert;
 In example that men should see that by grave reason
 Men might not be saved but through mercy and grace,
 And through penance and passion and perfect belief;
 And became man of a maid and *metropolitanus*,²
 And baptized and bishoped with the blood of his heart
 All that willed, and would with their mind believe it,

¹ See page 207.

² See page 207.

Many a saint since hath suffered to die,
 All for to confirm the faith in many countries died,
 In India and in Alexandria in Armenia and Spain,
 In doleful death died for their faith's sake;
 In salvation of the faith Saint Thomas¹ was martyred,
 Amongst unnatural Christians for Christ's love he died,
 And for the right of all this realm and all realms Christian.
 Holy church is honoured highly through his dying,
 He is a pattern to all bishops and a bright mirror,
 And sovereignly to such that of Syria bear the name,
 That hop about in England to hallow men's alters,
 And creep amongst curates and confess against the law,
Nolite mittere falcem in messem alienam, etc.

Many man for Christ's love was martyred in Rome
 Ere any Christianity was known there or any cross honoured.

'Every bishop that beareth cross by that he is held,
 Through his province to pass and to his people to show him,
 Tell them and teach them on the Trinity to believe,
 And feed them with spiritual food and needy folk to help.
 But Isaiah of you speaketh and Hosea both,
 That no man should be bishop unless he has both,
 Bodily food and spiritual food and give where there is need;

In domo mea non est panis neque vestimentum, et ideo nolite constituere me regem.

Hosea saith for such that sick be and feeble,

Inferte omnes decimas in horreum meum, ut sit cibus in domo mea.

But we Christian creatures that on the cross believe,
 Are firm as in the faith God forbid else!
 And have clerks to keep us therein and them that shall come after us.

'And Jews live in true law our Lord wrote it himself,
 In stone, for it steadfast was and stand should ever—
Dilige Deum et proximum is perfect Jewish law—

And gave it to Moses to teach men till Messiah come;
 And on that law they live yet and hold it the best.

'And yet knew they Christ that Christianity taught,
 For a perfect prophet that many people saved
 From strange ills they say it oft,
 Both of miracles and marvels and how he men feasted
 With two fishes and five loaves five thousand people;
 And by that eating men might well see that Messiah he was.

¹ See page 207.

And when he raised up Lazarus that laid was in grave,
And under stone dead and stank with loud voice him called,

Lazare, veni foras,

Dead he rose and moved right before the Jews.

But they said and swore with sorcery he wrought,

And studied to destroy him and destroyed themselves;

And through his patience their power to pure naught he brought;

Patientes vincunt.

Daniel of their undoing divined and said,

Cum sanctus sanctorum veniat, cessabit unxio vestra.

'And yet believe those wretches that he was *pseudo-propheta*,

And that his lore be lyings and blame it all,

And hope that he be to come that shall them relieve,

Moses again, or Messiah their masters still prophecy.

'But Pharisees and Saracens Scribes and Greeks

Are folk of one faith the Father God they honour;

And since the Saracens and also the Jews

Know the first clause of our belief *Credo in Deum patrem omnipotentem,*

Prelates of Christian provinces should prove, if they might,

Teach them by little and little *et in Jesum Christum, filium,*

Till they can speak and spell *et in Spiritum Sanctum,*

And render it and record it with *remissionem peccatorum,*

Carnis resurrectionem, et vitam aeternam. Amen.'

PASSUS XVI

'Now fair befall you!' quoth I then 'for your fair showing,
 For Haukyn's love the active man ever I shall you love;
 But yet I am in doubt what charity means.'
 'It is a full excellent tree,' quoth he 'truly to tell.
 Mercy is the root thereof the middle trunk is pity.
 The leaves be true words the law of holy church,
 The blossom be courteous speech and benign looking;
 Patience is called the pure tree and poor simple of heart,
 And so, through God and through good men groweth the fruit charity.'
 'I would travel,' quoth I, 'this tree to see twenty hundred miles,
 And for to have my fill of that fruit forsake all other food.
 Lord,' quoth I, 'does any wight know whereabouts it groweth?'
 'It groweth in a garden,' quoth he 'that God made himself,
 Amidst man's body the root is of that trunk;
 Heart is called the garden that it groweth in,
 And *Liberum Arbitrium* hath the land to farm,
 Under Piers the Plowman to hoe it and to weed it.'
 'Piers the Plowman!' quoth I then and all for pure joy
 That I heard named his name soon I swooned after,
 And lay long in a lone dream and at last me thought,
 That Piers the Plowman all the place me showed,
 And bade me gaze on the tree on top and on root.
 With three piles was it under-propped I perceived it soon.
 'Piers,' quoth I, 'I pray thee why stand these piles here?'
 'Against winds, if thou would'st know,' quoth he 'to keep it from
 falling;

*Cum ceciderit justus, non collidetur; quia Dominus supponit manum
 suam;*

And, in blossom time, nip the flowers unless the piles help.
 The World is a wicked wind to them that seek truth,
 Covetousness cometh of that wind and creepeth among the leaves,
 And nearly destroys the fruit through many fair sights.
 Then with the first pile I strike him down that is, *potentia-Dei-Patris*.
 The Flesh is a fell wind and in flowering time
 Through liking and lusts so loud he begins to blow,

That it nourisheth foolish sights and sometimes words,
 And wicked works thereof worms of sin,
 And biteth the blossoms right to the bare leaves.
 Then take I to the second pile *sapientia-Dei-Patris*,
 That is, the passion and the power of our prince Jesus,
 Through prayers and through penances and God's passion in mind,
 I save it till I see it ripen and somewhat fruited.

And then tries the Fiend my fruit to destroy,
 With all the wiles that he can and shaketh the root,
 And casteth among the crop unfriendly neighbours,
 Backbiters mischief-making brawlers and quarrellers,
 And layeth a ladder thereto of lies are its rungs,
 And fetcheth away my flowers sometimes before both my eyes.
 But *Liberum Arbitrium* hinders him sometimes,
 Who is lieutenant to look to it well by leave of myself;

Videatis qui peccat in Spiritum Sanctum, nunquam remittetur, etc.;

Hoc est idem, qui peccat per liberum arbitrium non repugnat.

But when the Fiend and the Flesh forth with the World
 Threaten behind me my fruit for to steal,
 Then *Liberum Arbitrium* seizes the third pile,
 And striketh down the demon purely through grace
 And help of the Holy Ghost and thus have I the mastery.'

'Now fair fall you, Piers,' quoth I 'so fair you describe
 The power of these posts and their own might.
 But I have thoughts in a multitude of these three piles,
 In what wood they were and where that they grew;
 For are they all alike long none less than another,
 And to my mind, as methinketh from one source they grew,
 And of one greatness and green of grain they seem.'

'That is true,' said Piers 'so it may befall;
 I shall tell thee at once what this tree is.
 The ground where it groweth Goodness is called,
 And I have told thee what the tree is named the Trinity it meaneth'—
 And sternly he looked on me and therefore I spared
 To ask him any more thereof and asked him full fair
 To describe the fruit that so fair hangeth.
 'Here now hangeth,' quoth he 'if I needs must,
 Matrimony I mention a moist fruit withal.
 Then continence is near the top like a sweet grafted pear,
 Then beareth the crop good fruit and cleanest of all,
 Maidenhood, angels' pears and soonest will be ripe,

And sweet without swelling sour is it never.'
 I prayed Piers to pull down an apple, if he would,
 And suffer me to try what savour it had.
 And Piers threw up among the crop and then it began to cry,
 And he shook widowhood and it wept after.
 And matrimony was moved it made a foul noise,
 I was sorry when Piers rocked it it lamented so ruefully.
 For ever as they dropped down the devil was ready,
 And gathered them all together both great and small,
 Adam and Abraham and Isaiah the prophet,
 Sampson and Samuel and Saint John the Baptist;
 Bore them forth boldly nobody stopped him,
 And made of holy men his hoard in *limbo inferni*,
 Where is darkness and dread and the devil master.
 And Piers for pure anger one pile he seized,
 And hit after him happen how it might,
Filius by the Father's will and grace of *Spiritus Sanctus*,
 To go rob that ruffian and take the fruit from him.

And then spoke *Spiritus Sanctus* in Gabriel's mouth,
 To a maid called Mary a meek one withal,
 'That one Jesus, a justice's son must rest in her chamber,
 Till *plenitudo temporis* fully come were,
 That Piers' fruit flowered and came to be ripe.
 And then should Jesus joust for that by judgement of arms,
 Which should take the fruit the Fiend or himself.'
 The maid mildly then to the messenger consented,
 And said courteously to him 'Lo me, his handmaiden
 For to do his will without any sin';

Ecce ancilla Domini; fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum, etc.
 And in the womb of that girl was he forty weeks,
 Till he grew a child through her flesh and of fighting knew
 To have fought with the Fiend ere full time came.
 And Piers the Plowman perceived the fullness of time,
 And taught him medicine his life for to save,
 So that though he were wounded by his enemy to heal himself;
 And he did try his surgery on them that sick were,
 Till he was a perfect practitioner if any harm fell,
 And he sought out the sick and sinful both,
 And healed sick and sinful both blind and lame,
 And common women converted and to good turned;
Non est sanis opus medicus, sed infirmis, etc.

Both lepers and the dumb and those with bloody flux,
 Oft he healed such he held it no great skill,
 Save when he healed Lazarus that had lain in the grave,
Quatriduanus dead — alive did he walk.
 But as he made that mastery *moestus coepit esse*,
 And wept water with his eyes there saw it many.
 Some that the sight saw said at the time,
 That he was giver of life and lord of high heaven.
 The Jews argued against it and judged by laws,
 And said he wrought through witchcraft and with the devil's might,
Daemonium habes, etc.

'Then are ye churls,' quoth Jesus 'and your children both,
 And Satan your saviour yourselves now ye witness.
 For I have saved yourselves,' saith Christ 'and your sons after,
 Your bodies, your beasts and blind men helped,
 And fed you with fishes and with five loaves,
 And left over baskets full of broken meat bear away whoso would';—
 And he attacked the Jews manfully and threatened to beat them,
 And struck them with a cord and cast down their stalls,
 That in church bartered or changed any money,
 And said it in sight of them all so that all heard,
 'I shall overturn this temple and throw it down,
 And in three days after build it anew,
 And make it as much or more in all ways,
 As ever it was, and as large wherefore I command you,
 Of prayers and of perfectness call this place;

Domus mea domus orationis vocabitur.'

Envy and evil will was in the Jews;
 They cast about and contrived to kill him when they might,
 Each day after another their time they awaited.
 Till it befell on a Friday a little before Passover,
 The Thursday before when he made his maundy,
 Sitting at supper he said these words—
 'I am sold through one of you he shall the time rue
 That ever he his saviour sold for silver or aught else.'

Judas quarrelled with that but Jesus him told,
 It was himself truly and said '*tu dicis*.'
 Then went he forth, that wicked man and with the Jews met,
 And told them a token how to know Jesus,
 And which token to this day too much is used,
 That is, kissing and fair countenance and unkind will;

And so it was by Judas then that Jesus was betrayed.
 'Ave, rabi,' quoth that wretch and right to him he went,
 And kissed him, to be caught thereby and killed of the Jews.
 Then Jesus to Judas and to the Jews said,
 'Falseness I find in thy fair speech,
 And guile in thy glad cheer and gall is in thy laughing.
 Thou shalt be mirror to many men to deceive,
 But the worst and thy wickedness shall fall upon thyselfes;

*Necesse est ut veniant scandala; vae homini illi per quem scandalum
 venit!*

Though I by treason be taken at your own will,
 Suffer my apostles in peace and in peace to go.'
 On a Thursday in darkness thus was he taken
 Through Judas and the Jews Jesus was his name;
 That on the Friday following for mankind's sake
 Jousted in Jerusalem a joy to us all.
 On cross upon Calvary Christ gave battle,
 Against death and the devil destroyed both their mights,
 Died, and death undid and day of night made.

And I awoke therewith and wiped my eyes,
 And after Piers the Plowman pried and stared.
 Eastwards and westwards I searched hard,
 And went forth as an idiot in country to espy
 After Piers the Plowman many a place I sought.
 And then met I with a man on a mid-Lenten Sunday,
 As hoar as a hawthorne and Abraham he was called.
 I asked him first from whence he came,
 And of what part he was and whither he was going.

'I am Faith,' quoth that man 'it befits not to lie,
 And of Abraham's house a herald at arms.
 I seek after a person that I saw once,
 A full bold bachelor I knew him by his blazon.'
 'What beareth that man?' quoth I then 'so bliss thee betide!'
 'Three persons in one none longer than another,
 Of one size and might in measure and in length;
 What one doth, all do and each doth by his one.
 The first hath might and majesty maker of all things;
 Pater is his own name a person by himself.
 The second of that sire is truth, Filius,
 Warden of those who wisdom have was ever without beginning.
 The third is called Holy Ghost a person by himself,

The light of all that life hath on land and in water,
 Comforter of creatures of him cometh all bliss.
 So three belongeth to a lord that lordship claimeth,
 Might, and a mediator to know his own might,
 Of him and of his servant and what they suffer both.
 So God that beginning had never when him good thought,
 Sent forth his son as for servant at that time,
 To work here till issue were sprung,
 That is, children of charity and holy church the mother.
 Patriarchs and prophets and apostles were the children,
 And Christ and Christendom and Christian holy church.
 Meaning that man must on one God believe,
 And where he liked and loved in three persons himself showed.

'And that it may be so and soth manhood it showeth,
 Wedlock and widowhood with virginity named,
 In token of the Trinity was taken out of one man.
 Adam father of us all Eve was of himself,
 And the issue that they had it was of them both,
 And either is the other's joy in three different persons,
 And in heaven and here one single name;
 And thus is mankind or manhood of matrimony sprung,
 And it betokeneth the Trinity and true belief.
 Mighty is matrimony that multiplieth the earth,
 And betokeneth truely tell if I dare,
 Him that first formed all the Father of heaven.
 The Son, if I it dare say resembleth well the widow,

Deus meus, Deus meus, ut quid dereliquisti me?

That is, creator became creature to know what was both;
 As widow without wedlock was never yet seen,
 No more might God be man unless he mother had;
 So widow without wedlock may not well stand,
 Nor matrimony without wife is not much to praise;

Maledictus homo qui non reliquit semen in Israel, etc.

Thus in three persons is perfectly manhood,
 That is, man and his mate and the mother's children,
 And is naught but offspring of one generation before Jesus Christ in
 heaven,

So is the Father forth with the Son and free will of both;

Spiritus procedens a Patre et Filio;

Which is the Holy Ghost of all and all is but one God.
 Thus in a summer I him saw as I sat in my porch;

I rose up and reverenced him and right fair him greeted;
 Three men to my sight I made well at ease,
 Washed their feet and wiped them and afterwards they eat
 Calves' flesh and a cake of bread and knew what I thought;
 Full true tokens between us are to tell when me liketh.
 First he tried me if I loved better
 Him, or Isaac mine heir the which he told me to kill.
 He knew my will by him he will me it allow,
 I am full certain in soul thereof and my son both.
 I circumcised my son then for his sake;
 Myself and my household and all that male were
 Bled blood for that lord's love and hope to bless the time.
 My trust and my faith is firm in this belief;
 For himself promised me and my issue both
 Land and lordship and life without end;
 To me and to mine issue more yet he me granted,
 Mercy for our misdeeds as many times as we ask;

Quam olim Abrahae promisisti, et semini ejus.

And then he sent to me to say I should do sacrifice,
 And do him worship with bread and with wine both,
 And called me the foundation of his faith his folk for to save,
 And defend them from the fiend folk that on me believed.
 Thus have I been his herald here and in hell,
 And comforted many a sorrowful that for his coming wait.
 And thus I seek him,' he said 'for I heard said lately
 Of a man that baptised him John the Baptist was his name,
 That to patriarchs and prophets and to other people in darkness
 Said that he saw him that should save us all;

Ecce agnus Dei, etc.'

I had wonder at his words and of his wide clothes;
 For in his bosom he bore a thing that he blessed ever.
 And I looked on his lap a leper lay therein
 Amongst patriarchs and prophets playing together.
 'What awaitest thou?' quoth he 'and what would'st thou have?'
 'I would know,' quoth I then 'what is in your lap?'
 'Lo!' quoth he, and let me see 'Lord, mercy!' I said,
 'This is a present of much price what prince shall it have?'
 'It is a precious present,' quoth he 'but the fiend it hath claimed,
 And me therewith,' quoth that man 'may no pledge redeem us,
 Nor no man be our bail nor bring us from this danger;
 Out of the fiend's pound no surety may us fetch,

Till he come that I speak of Christ is his name,
That shall deliver us some day out of the devil's power,
And better pledge for us lay than we be all worthy,
That is, life for life or lie thus ever
Lolling in my lap till such a lord us fetch.'
'Alas!' I said, 'that sin so long shall stay
The might of God's mercy that might us all amend!'
I wept for his words with that I saw another
Rapidly run forth the same way he went.
I asked him first from whence he came,
And what he was called and whither he was going and willingly he told.

PASSUS XVII

'I AM Spes,' quoth he, 'a scout and I spy after a knight.
That gave me a commandment upon the mount of Sinai,
To rule all realms with I bear the writ here.'
'Is it sealed?' I said 'may men see thy letters?'
'Nay,' he said, 'I seek him that hath the seal to keep;
And that is, cross and Christendom and Christ thereon to hang.
And when it is sealed so I know well the truth,
That Lucifer's lordship last shall no longer.'
'Let see thy letters,' quoth I 'that we might the law know.'
Then plucked he forth a patent a piece of hard rock,
Whereon were written two words on this wise glossed,

Dilige Deum et proximum tuum, etc.

This was the text truly I took full good notice;
The gloss was gloriously written with a gilt pen,

In his duobus mandatis tota lex pendet et prophetia.

'Be here all thy lord's laws?' quoth I 'Yea, believe me well,' he said,
'And whoso doth according to this writ I will undertake,
Shall never devil him hurt nor death in soul grieve.
For though I say it myself I have saved with this charm
Of men and of women many score thousands.'
'He saith soth,' said the herald 'I have found it oft;
Lo here in my lap that believed on that charm,
Joshua and Judith and Judas Maccabeus,
Yea, and sixty thousand more besides that be not seen here.'

'Your words are wonderful,' quoth I then 'which of you is truest,
And firmest to believe on for life and for soul?
Abraham saith that he saw holy the Trinity,
Three persons individually separate from each other,
And all three but one God thus Abraham me taught,
And hath saved that believed so and were sorry for their sins,
He cannot say how many and some are in his lap.
What needed it then a new law to begin,
Since the first sufficeth to salvation and to bliss?
And now cometh Spes, and speaketh who hath espied the law,
And telleth naught of the Trinity that gave him his letters,

“To believe and love on one Lord almighty,
And then right as myself love all other people.”
The man that walketh with one staff he seemeth in greater health
Than he that walketh with two staves in sight of us all.
And right so, by the rood! reason me showeth,
It is lighter for unlearned men one lesson to know,
Than for to teach them two and hard enough to learn the least!
It is full hard for any man on Abraham to believe,
And well away worse yet for to love a rascal!
It is lighter to believe in three lovely persons
Than for to love and to believe as well wretches as the true.
Go thy ways,’ quoth I to *Spes* ‘so me God help!
Those that learn thy law will a little while follow it!’

And as we went thus on the way conversing together
Then saw we a Samaritan sitting on a mule,
Riding full speedily the same way we were going,
Coming from a country that men called Jericho;
To a joust in Jerusalem he hurried away fast.
Both the herald and Hope and he met at once
Where a man was wounded and by thieves attacked.
He could neither walk nor stand nor stir foot nor hands,
Nor help himself truly for half alive he seemed,
And as naked as a needle and none to help near him.

Faith had first sight of him but he hurried on the other side,
And would not come near him by nine lands’ length.

Hope came trotting after that had so boasted,
How he with Moses’ commandment had many men helped;
But when he had sight of that man aside he began to draw,
Fearfully, by this day! as duck doth from a falcon.

But so soon as the Samaritan had sight of this man,
He alighted from his horse and led him by his hand,
And to the wight he went his wounds to behold,
And perceived by his pulse he was in peril to die,
And unless he had succour quickly rise should he never;
And hurried to his bottles and both he broached;
With wine and with oil his wounds he washed,
Anointed him and bound his head and in his lap him laid,
And led him then on his horse to *Lex Christi*, a grange,
Well six miles or seven from the new market;
Harboured him at a hostelry and to the host called,
And said, ‘Here, keep this man till I come the jousts,

And lo here is silver,' he said 'for salve for his wounds.'
And he gave him two pence for upkeep as it were,
And said, 'What he spendeth more I make thee good hereafter;
For I may not stay,' quoth that man and horse he bestrides,
And hastened him Jerusalem-ward the straight way to ride.

Faith followeth after fast and sought to meet him,
And *Spes* quickly him sped to succeed if he could,
To overtake him and talk to him ere they to town came.
And when I saw this, I stayed not but started to run,
And followed that Samaritan that was so full of pity,
And asked him to be his page 'Gramercy,' he said,
'Thy friend and thy fellow,' quoth he 'thou findest me at need.
And I thanked him then and after I him told,
How that Faith flew away and *Spes* his fellow both,
For sight of the sorrowful man that robbed was by thieves.
'Hold them excused,' quoth he 'their help may little avail;
May no medicine on earth the man to health bring.
Neither Faith nor fine Hope so festered be his wounds,
Without the blood of a child born of a maid.
And be he bathed in that blood baptised, as it were,
And then plastered with penance and passion of that baby,
He should stand and walk but stalwart will he be never,
Till he have eaten all the child and his blood drunk.
For went never wight in this world through that wilderness,
But he was robbed or rifled rode he there or walked,
Save Faith, and his fellow *Spes*, and myself,
And thyself now, and such as follow our works.
For outlaws in the wood and under banks lurk,
And can each man see and good note take,
Who is behind and who in front and who be on horse,
For they hold him hardier on horse than he that is on foot.
For they saw me, that am Samaritan follow Faith and his fellow
On my steed that is called *Caro* (of mankind I took it),
He was fearful, that villain and hid him *in inferno*.
But ere this day three days I dare undertake,
That he is fettered, that felon fast with chains,
And never after grieve a man that goeth this same way;

O mors, ero mors tua, etc.,

And then shall Faith be forester here and in this wood walk,
And direct common men that know not the country,
Which is the way that I went and forth to Jerusalem.

And Hope the hostelry's man shall be where the man lieth healing;
 And all that feeble and faint be that Faith cannot teach,
 Hope shall lead them forth with love as his letter telleth,
 And welcome them and heal through holy church's faith,
 Till I have salve for all sick and then I shall return,
 And come again through this country and comfort all sick
 That crave it or covet it and cry thereafter.
 For the child was born in Bethlehem that with his blood shall save
 All that live in faith, and follow his fellow's teaching.'

'Ah! sweet sir!' I said then 'am I to believe,
 As Faith and his fellow informed me both?
 In three persons separable that endless were ever,
 And all three but one God thus Abraham me taught;—
 And Hope afterwards he bade me to love
 One God with all my strength and all men after,
 Love them like myself but our Lord above all."
 'According to Abraham,' quoth he 'that herald at arms,
 Set fast thy faith and firm believe.
 And, as Hope told thee I command thee love
 Thy fellow Christians evermore equally with thyself.
 And if conscience speak against it or kind wit either,
 Or heretics with arguments thine hand thou them show;
 For God is like a hand hear now and know it.

'The Father was first, as a fist with one finger folding,
 Till he loved and pleased to unloosen his finger,
 And proffer it forth as with a palm to what place it would.
 The palm is purely the hand and proffereth forth the fingers
 To minister and to make what the might of the hand willeth,
 And betokeneth truly tell whoso liketh,
 The Holy Ghost of heaven he is as the palm.
 The fingers that free be to fold and to serve,
 Betokeneth sothly the Son that sent was to earth,
 That touched and tasted at teaching of the palm
 Saint Mary a maid and mankind took upon him;

Qui conceptus est de Spiritu Sancto, natus, etc.

The Father is then as a fist with finger to touch,

Quia omnia traham ad meipsum, etc.,

All that the palm perceiveth profitable to feel.
 Thus are they all but one as it a hand were,
 And three different sights in one showing.
 The palm, for he putteth forth fingers and the fist both,

Right so readily reason it showeth,
How he that is Holy Ghost Sire and Son witnesseth.
And as the hand holds hard and all things fast
Through four fingers and a thumb forth from the palm,
Right so the Father and the Son and Saint Spirit the third
Hold all the wide world within them three,
Both sky and the wind water and earth,
Heaven and hell and all that there is in.
Thus it is, needeth no man to think otherwise,
That three things belong in our Lord of heaven,
And are separately by themselves but apart were never,
No more than my hand may move without fingers.
And as my fist is a full hand folded together,
So is the Father fully God former and shaper,

Tu fabricator omnium, etc.,

And all the might with him is in making of things.
‘The fingers form a full hand to portray or paint
Carving and compassing as craft of the fingers;
Right so is the Son the science of the Father,
And fully God, as is the Father no feebler nor no stronger.
‘The palm is truly the hand hath power by himself,
Otherwise from the closed fist or workmanship of fingers;
For the palm hath power to move out all the joints,
And to unfold the folded fist and the fingers’ purpose.
So is the Holy Ghost God neither greater nor less
Than is the Sire and the Son and of the same might,
And all are they but one God as is mine hand and my fingers,
Unfolded or folded my fist and my palm,
All is but a hand however I look at it.

‘But who is hurt in the hand even in the midst,
He may hold right naught reason it showeth;
For the fingers, that fold should and the fist make,
For pain of the palm power them faileth
To clutch or to grasp to clip or to hold.
Were the middle of my hand maimed or pierced,
I should hold right naught of that I might reach to.
But though my thumb and my fingers both were flayed,
And the middle of my hand without ill ease,
In many kinds of ways I might myself help,
Both move and mend though all my fingers ached.
By this, methinketh I see an evidence,

That whoso sinneth against the Holy Spirit absolved will he be never,
Neither here nor elsewhere as I heard tell,

Qui peccat in Spiritum Sanctum, nunquam, etc.,

For he pricketh God as in the palm that *peccat in Spiritum Sanctum*.

For God the Father is as a fist the Son is as a finger,

The Holy Ghost of heaven is, as it were, the palm.

So whoso sinneth against the Holy Spirit it seemeth that he grieveth
God, where he grasps with and would his grace quench.

‘And to a torch or a taper the Trinity is likened;

As wax and a wick are entwined together,

And then a fire flames forth out of both;

And as wax and wick and hot fire together

Foster forth a flame and a fair light,

So doth the Sire and the Son and also *Spiritus Sanctus*

Foster forth amongst folk love and faith,

That all kinds of Christians cleanseth of sins.

And as thou seest sometimes suddenly a torch,

The blaze thereof blown out yet burneth the wick,

Without flame or light the match burns,

So is the Holy Ghost God and grace without mercy

To all unkind creatures that covet to destroy

Loyal love or life that our Lord made.

And as glowing embers glad not those workmen,

That work and watch on winter nights,

So much as a torch or a candle that caught hath fire and blazeth,

No more doth Sire nor Son nor Saint Spirit together,

Grant grace nor forgiveness of sins,

Till the Holy Ghost begin to glow and to blaze.

So the Holy Ghost gloweth but as an ember,

Till that faithful love light on him and blow,

And then flameth he as fire on Father and on *Filius*,

And melteth their might into mercy as men may see in winter

Icicles in eaves through heat of the sun,

Melt in a minute while into mist and to water;

So grace of the Holy Ghost the great might of the Trinity

Melteth into mercy to the merciful, and to none other.

And as wax without more on a warm coal

Will burn and blaze be they together,

And solace them that would see that sit in darkness,

So will the Father forgive folk of mild hearts

That ruefully repent and restitution make,

In as much as they may amend and repay.
 And if it suffice not for assets that in such a will dieth,
 Mercy for his meakness will make good the remnant.
 And as the wick and fire will make a warm flame
 For to mirth men with that in murk sit,
 So will Christ of his courtesy if men cry him mercy,
 Both forgive and forget and pray for us
 To the Father of heaven forgiveness to have.

'But strike fire from a flint four hundred winters,
 Unless thou have tow to take it with tinder or twigs,
 All thy labour is lost and all thy long travail;
 For may no fire flame make fail it fuel.
 So is the Holy Ghost God and grace without mercy
 To all unkind creatures Christ himself witnesseth,

Amen dico vobis, nescio vos, etc.

'Be unkind to thy fellow Christians and all that thou canst pray,
 Give and do penance day and night ever,
 And purchase all the pardons of Pampeluna and Rome,
 And indulgences enough and be *ingratus* to thy kind,
 The Holy Ghost heareth thee not nor help thee by reason;
 For unkindness quencheth him so he can not shine,
 Nor burn nor blaze clear for blowing of unkindness.
 Paul the apostle proveth whether I lie,

Si linguis hominum loquar, etc.

Therefore beware, ye wise men that with the world dealeth,
 That rich be and reason know rule well your soul.
 Be not unkind, I counsel you to your fellow Christians.
 For many of you rich men by my soul, men telleth,
 Ye burn, but ye blaze not that is a hidden beacon;

Non omnis qui dicit Domine, Domine, intrabit, etc.

'Dives died damned for his unkindness
 Of his meat and his money to men that it needed.
 Each rich man I warn notice of him take,
 And give your goods to that God that Grace ariseth from.
 For they that be unkind to their own hope I none other,
 But they dwell where Dives is days without end.
 Thus is unkindness the contrary that quencheth, as it were,
 The grace of the Holy Ghost God's own kind.
 For what kind doth, unkind undoes as these cursed thieves,
 Unkind Christian men for covetousness and envy,
 Slayeth a man for his property with mouth or with hands.

For what the Holy Ghost hath to keep those villains destroy,
 The which is life and love the light of man's body.
 For every manner of good man may be likened to a torch,
 Or else to a taper to reverence the Trinity;
 And who murdereth a good man methinketh, by my conscience,
 He undoes the dearest light that our Lord loveth.

'But yet in many more manners men offend the Holy Ghost;
 But this is the worst way that any wight might
 Sin against the Saint Spirit by assenting to destroy,
 For covetousness of any kind of thing what Christ dearly bought.
 How might he ask mercy or any mercy him help,
 That wickedly and wilfully would mercy destroy?
 Innocence is next to God and night and day it crieth,
 "Vengeance, vengeance forgiven be it never,
 That killed us and shed our blood un-made us, as it were;

Vindica sanguinem iustorum!"

Thus "vengeance, vengeance" very charity asketh;
 And since holy church and charity charge this so strongly,
 Believe I never that our Lord will love what charity blames,
 Nor have pity for any prayer there that he maketh.'

'I pose I had sinned so and should now die,
 And now am sorry, that so the Saint Spirit I have offended,
 Confess me, and cry his grace God, that all made,
 And mildly his mercy ask might I not be saved?'
 'Yes,' said the Samaritan 'so well thou might repent,
 That righteousness through repentance to pity might turn.
 But it is but seldom seen where truth beareth witness,
 Any creature that is guilty before a king's justice,
 Be ransomed for his repentance where all reason him damnet'h.
 For where the injured prosecutes the appeal is so huge,
 That the king may do no mercy till both men agree,
 And both have justice as holy writ telleth;

Numquam dimittitur peccatum, donec restituatur ablatum.

Thus it fareth by such folk that falsely all their lives
 Evil live and cease not till life them forsake;
 Dread of despair driveth away then grace,
 So that mercy on their mind may not then fall;
 Good hope, that help should to despair turneth—
 Not of the powerlessness of God that he is not able
 To amend all that amiss is and his mercy greater
 Than all our wicked works as holy writ telleth,

Misericordia ejus super omnia opera ejus.

But, ere his righteousness to pity turn some restitution behoveth;
His sorrow is satisfaction for him that cannot pay.

‘Three things there be that make a man by their strength
For to flee his own house as holy writ showeth.
The one is a wicked wife that will not be chastened;
Her partner flee-eth from her for fear of her tongue.
And if his house be unroofed and rain on his bed,
He seeketh and seeketh till he sleep dry.
And when smoke and smother smite in his eyes,
It doth him worse than his wife or wet to sleep.
For smoke and smother smite in his eyes,
Till he be blear-eyed or blind and hoarse in the throat,
He coughs, and curses that Christ give them sorrow
Who should bring in better wood or blow till it burn.

‘These three that I tell of be thus to understand;
The wife is our wicked flesh that will not be chastened,
For nature cleaveth to him ever to oppose the soul.
And though it fall, it finds reasons that frailty made it;
And that is lightly forgiven and forgotten both,
To man that mercy asketh and amendment thinketh.
The rain that raineth where we rest would,
Be sicknesses and sorrows that we suffer oft,
As Paul the apostle to the people taught,

Virtus in infirmitate perficitur, etc.

And though that men make much noise in their affliction,
And be impatient in their penance pure reason knoweth,
That they have cause to complain by nature of their sickness;
And lightly our Lord at their lives’ end,
Hath mercy on such men that such evil suffer.
But the smoke and the smother that smite our eyes,
That is covetousness and unkindness that quencheth God’s mercy.
For unkindness is the contrary of all forms of reason;
For there is none sick nor sorry nor so great wretch,
That he may not love, if him like and give from his heart
Good will and good word both wish and will
All manner of men mercy and forgiveness,
And love them like himself and his life amend.
I may no longer stay,’ quoth he and his horse he spurred,
And went away as the wind and therewith I awoke.

PASSUS XVIII

LINEN-LESS¹ and wet-shod went I forth after,
 As a reckless fellow that of no woe recks,
 And went like a vagrant all my life,
 Till I waxed weary of the world and wished to sleep again,
 And leaned me about till Lent and long time I slept;
 And of Christ's passion and penance that the people saved,
 I rested and dreamed there, and snored fast till *ramis palmarum*;²
 Of children and of *gloria laus* greatly me dreamed,
 And how *hosanna* to the organ old folk sang.
 One like to the Samaritan and somewhat to Piers Plowman,
 Bare-foot on an ass's back boot-less came riding,
 Without spurs or spear lively he looked,
 As is the way with a knight that cometh to be dubbed,
 To get him gilt spurs or shoes slashed.
 Then was Faith in a window and cried '*a! fili David!*'
 As doth a herald at arms when the adventurous come to joust.
 Old Jews of Jerusalem for joy they sang,

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.

Then I asked of Faith what all that affair meant,
 And who should joust in Jerusalem 'Jesus,' he said,
 'And fetch what the Fiend claimeth Piers' fruit the Plowman.'
 'Is Piers in this place?' quoth I and he looked on me,
 'This Jesus of his nobility will joust in Piers' arms,
 In his helm and in his hauberk *humana natura*;
 That Christ be not known here for *consummatus Deus*,
 In Piers' garment the Plowman this pricker shall ride;
 For no dint shall him hurt as *in deitate Patris*.'
 'Who shall joust with Jesus?' quoth I 'Jews or scribes?'
 'Nay,' quoth He, 'the foul Fiend and falsehood and death.
 Death saith he will undo and down bring
 All that liveth or looketh in land or in water.
 Life saith that he lies and laith his life to pledge,
 That for all that death can do within three days,
 He will go and fetch from the Fiend Piers' fruit the Plowman,

¹ See page 207.

² See page 207.

And lay it where him liketh and Lucifer bind,
And beat and down bring sorrow and death for ever:

O mors, ero mors tua!

Then came *Pilatus* with much people *sedens pro tribunali*,
To see how daughtily death should do and judge the rights of both.
The Jews and the justices against Jesus they were,
And all their court on him cried *crucifige* sharp.
Then put forth a robber before Pilate, and said,
'This Jesus at our Jews' temple japed and despised,
To undo it on one day and in three days after
Edify it anew (here he stands that said it)
And yet make it as much in all manner of points,
Both as long and as large by height and by length.'
'*Crucifige*,' quoth a catchpole 'I warrant him a witch!'
'*Tolle, tolle!*' quoth another and took of keen thorns,
And began of keen thorn a garland to make,
And set it hard on his head and said in malice,
'*Ave, rabi!*' quoth that rascal and threw reeds at him,
Nailed him with three nails naked on the rood,
And poison on a pole they put up to his lips,
And bade him drink his death drink his days were done.
'And if that thou powerful be help now thyself,
If thou be Christ, and king's son come down off the rood;
Then shall we believe that Life thee loveth and will not let thee die!'
'*Consummatum est*,' quoth Christ and began for to swoon
Piteously and pale as a prisoner that dieth;
The lord of life and of light then layed his eyes together.
The day for dread withdrew and dark became the sun,
The veil shook and was cleft and all the world quaked.
Dead men for that din came out of deep graves,
And told why that tempest so long time lasted.
'For a bitter battle' the dead body said;
'Life and Death in this darkness one undoes the other;
Shall no wight know truly who shall have the mastery,
Ere Sunday about sun-rising' and sank with that to earth.
Some said that he was God's son that so fair died,

Vere filius Dei erat iste, etc.

And some said he was a witch 'it is good that one try,
Whether he be dead or not dead down ere he be taken.'

Two thieves also suffered death that time,
Upon a cross beside Christ so was the common law.

A catchpole came forth and cracked both their legs,
 And their arms after of each of those thieves.
 But was no boy so bold God's body to touch;
 For he was knight and king's son nature granted that time,
 That no rascal was so hardy to lay hand upon him.
 But there came forth a knight with a keen spear ground,
 Called *Longinus*, as the story telleth and long had lost his sight.
 Before Pilate and the other people in the place he stood;
 Spite his many teeth he was made that time
 To take the spear in his hand and joust with Jesus;
 For all they were afraid that waited on horse or stood,
 To touch him or to handle him or take him down off rood.
 But this blind bachelor then struck him through the heart;
 The blood sprung down by the spear and unbarred the knight's eyes.
 Then fell the knight upon knees and cried him mercy—
 'Against my will it was, lord to wound you so sore!'
 He sighed and said 'sore it methinketh;
 For the deed that I have done I deliver me to your grace;
 Have on me pity, righteous Jesus!' and right with that he wept.

Then began Faith fiercely the false Jews to despise,
 Called them caitives accursed for ever,
 For this foul villainy 'vengeance to you all!
 To make the blind beat him bound it was a knave's counsel.
 Cursed caitiff knighthood was it never
 To ill treat a dead body by day or by night.
 The prize yet hath he gained for all his great wound.
 For your champion of chivalry chief knight of you all,
 Yields him defeated in the running right to Jesus' will.
 For be this darkness done his death will be avenged,
 And ye, lordlings, have lost for Life shall have the mastery.
 And your franchise, that free was fallen in thraldom,
 And ye, churls, and your children succeed shall ye never,
 Nor have lordship in land nor no land till,
 But all barren be and usury use,
 Which is a life that our Lord in all laws curseth.
 Now your good days are done as Daniel prophesied,
 When Christ came, of their kingdom the crown should fall;

Cum veniat sanctus sanctorum, cessabit unctio vestra.'

What with fear of this marvel and of the false Jews,
 I withdrew me in that darkness to *descendit ad inferna*.
 And there I saw sothly *secundum scripturas*,

Out of the west a wench, as me thought,
Came walking in the way to Hell-ward she looked.
Mercy was called that maid a meek thing withal,
A full benign lady and gentle of speech.
Her sister, as it seemed came softly walking,
Even out of the east and westward she looked.
A full comely creature Truth she was called,
For the virtue that her followed afraid was she never.
When these maidens met Mercy and Truth,
Each asked the other of this great wonder,
Of the din and of the darkness and how the day began to dawn,
And what a light and a brightness lay before Hell.
'I wonder at these happenings in faith,' said Truth,
'And am seeking to discover what this marvel meaneth.'
'Have no wonder,' quoth Mercy 'joy it betokeneth.
A maiden called Mary and mother without knowledge
Of any human creature conceived through speech
And grace of the Holy Ghost waxed great with child;
Without stain into this world she brought him;
And that my tale be true I take God to witness.
Since this child was born be thirty winters passed;
Who died and death suffered this day about midday.
And that is cause of this eclipse that closeth now the sun,
In meaning that man shall from darkness be drawn,
The while this light and this brightness shall Lucifer blind.
For patriarchs and prophets have preached hereof often,
That man shall man save through a maiden's help,
And what was lost through tree tree shall it win,
And what death down brought death shall relieve.'
'What thou tellest,' quoth Truth 'is but a tale of waltrot!
For Adam and Eve and Abraham with others,
Patriarchs and prophets that in pain lie,
Believe thou never that yon light them aloft will bring,
Nor have them out of Hell hold thy tongue, Mercy!
It is but a trifle that thou tellest I, Truth, know the soth.
For that is once in Hell out cometh he never;
Job the prophet, patriarch reproveth thy sayings,
Quia in inferno nulla est redemptio.
Then Mercy full mildly mouthed these words,
'Through experience,' quoth she 'I hope they shall be saved.
For venom undoes venom and that I prove by reason.

For of all venoms foulest is the scorpion,
 May no medicine help the place where he stingeth,
 Till he be dead and placed thereon the evil he destroyeth,
 The first venom through venom of himself.
 So shall this death undo I dare my life lay,
 All that Death undid first through the devil's enticing;
 And right as through guile man was beguiled,
 So shall grace that began make a good sleight;

Ars ut artem falleret.

'Now stay we,' said Truth 'I see, as methinketh,
 Out of the cold of the north not full far hence,
 Righteousness come running rest we the while;
 For she knows more than we she was ere we both.'
 'That is soth,' said Mercy 'and I see here by south,
 Where Peace cometh playing in patience clothed;
 Love hath coveted her long believe I none other
 But he sent her some letter what this light meaneth,
 That is over Hell thus she us shall tell.'

When Peace, in patience clothed approached near them twain,
 Righteousness her revered for her rich clothing,
 And prayed Peace to tell her to what place she went,
 And in her gay garments whom greet she thought?
 'My will is to wend,' quoth she 'and welcome them all,
 That many day I might not see for murkyness of sin.
 Adam and Eve and others more in Hell,
 Moses and many more mercy shall have;
 And I shall dance thereto do thou so, sister!
 For Jesus jousted well joy beginneth to dawn;

Ad vesperum demorabitur fletus, et ad matutinum laetitia.

Love, that is my lover such letters me sent,
 That Mercy, my sister, and I mankind should save;
 And that God hath forgiven and granted me, Peace, and Mercy,
 To be man's surety for evermore after.

Lo! here the patent! quoth Peace 'in pace in idipsum—
 And that this deed shall endure *dormiam et requiescam.*'

'What, ravest thou?' quoth Righteousness 'or thou art right drunk!
 Believest thou that yonder light unlock might Hell,
 And save man's soul? sister, ween it never!
 At the beginning, God gave the judgement himself,
 That Adam and Eve and all that them followed
 Should die down right and dwell in pain after,

If that they touched a tree and the fruit ate.
 Adam afterwards against his warning,
 Ate of that fruit and forsook, as it were,
 The love of our Lord and his lore both,
 And followed what the fiend taught and his fellow's will,
 Against reason, I, Righteousness record thus with truth,
 That their punishment be perpetual and no prayer them help.
 Therefore let them chew as they chose and chide we not, sisters,
 For it is helpless harm the bite that they took.'

'And I shall prove,' quoth Peace 'their pain must have an end,
 And woe into well must wend at last;
 For had they wist of no woe well had they not known.
 For no wight knows what well is that never woe suffered,
 Nor what is called hunger that had never lack.
 If no night were no man, as I believe,
 Would know clearly what day means;
 Would never right rich man that liveth in rest and ease
 Know what woe is except for natural death.
 So God that began all of his good will
 Became man of a maid mankind to save,
 And suffered himself to be sold to see the sorrow of dying,
 The which un-knitteth all care and commencing is of rest.
 For till *modicum* meet with us I may it well avow,
 Knows no wight, as I ween what enough means.

'Therefore God of his goodness the first man Adam,
 Set him in solace and in sovereign mirth;
 And then he suffered him sin sorrow to feel,
 To see what well was truly to know it.
 And after, God ventured himself and took Adam's nature,
 To know what he hath suffered in three sundry places,
 Both in Heaven, and in earth and now to Hell he thinketh,
 To know what all woe is that knew of all joy.
 So it shall fare with these folk their folly and their sin,
 Shall teach them what anguish is and bliss without end.
 Knows no wight what war is where that peace reigneth,
 Nor what is indeed well till "well-away" him teach.'

Then was there a wight with two broad eyes,
 Book was called the *beau-père*¹ a bold man of speech.
 'By God's body,' quoth this Book 'I will bear witness,
 That when this child was born there blazed a star,

¹ See page 207.

That all the wise of this world in one thought accorded,
 That such a child was born in Bethlehem city,
 That man's soul should save and sin destroy.
 And all the elements,' quoth the Book 'hereof bear witness,
 That he was God that all wrought the welkin first showed;
 Those that were in heaven took *stella cometa*,
 And kindled her as a torch to reverence his birth;
 And light followed the Lord into the low earth.
 The water witnessed that he was God for he went on it;
 Peter the apostle perceived his going,
 And as he went on the water well him knew, and said,

Jube me venire ad te super aquas.

And lo! how the sun began to lock her light in herself,
 When she saw him suffer who sun and sea made!
 The earth for heaviness that he would suffer,
 Quaked as a live thing and all crushed the rock!
 Lo! Hell might not hold but opened when God suffered,
 And let out Simeon's sons to see him hang on rood.
 And now shall Lucifer believe it though him loth think;
 For *Gigas* the giant with a weapon made
 To break and to beat down those that be against Jesus.
 And I, Book, will be burnt but Jesus rise to live,
 In all the might of man and his mother gladden,
 And comfort all his kin and out of care bring,
 And all the Jews' joy dissolve and disjoin;
 And unless they reverence his rood and his resurrection,
 And believe on a new law be lost life and soul.'

'Abide we,' said Truth 'I hear and see both,
 How a spirit speaketh to Hell and bids unbar the gates;
Attollite portas, etc.'

A voice loud in that light to Lucifer crieth,
 'Princes of this place unbolt and unlock!
 For here cometh with crown that king is of glory.
 Then sighed Satan and said to them all,
 'Such a light, against our leave Lazarus it fetched away;
 Care and confusion is come to us all.
 If this king come in mankind will he fetch,
 And lead it where he liketh and easily me bind.
 Patriarchs and prophets have talked hereof long,
 That such a lord and a light should lead them all hence.'
 'Listen,' quoth Lucifer 'for I this lord know,

Both this lord and this light it is long ago I knew him.
May no death him harm nor no devil's cunning,
And where he will, is his way but ware him of the perils;
If he reave me of my right he robbeth me by mastery.
For by right and by reason those people that be here
Body and soul be mine both good and ill.
For himself said that sire is of heaven,
If Adam eat the apple all should die,
And dwell with us devils this threat he made;
And he that truth is said these words;
And since I have been in possession seven hundred winters,
I believe that law will not let him in the least.'
'That is soth,' said Satan 'but I me sore dread,
For thou gained them with guile and his garden broke,
And in semblance of a serpent sat on the apple-tree,
And egged them on to eat Eve by herself,
And told her a tale of treason were the words;
And so thou haddest them out and hither at last.
It is not easily held where guile is the root.'
'For God will not be beguiled' quoth Goblin, 'nor tricked;
We have no true title to them for through treason were they damned.
'Certes, I dread me,' quoth the Devil 'lest truth will them fetch.
This thirty winter, as I ween hath he gone and preached;
I have assailed him with sin and at some time asked
Whether he were God or God's son? he gave me short answer.
And thus he walked forth this two and thirty winter,
And when I saw it was so sleeping, I went
To warn Pilate's wife what sort of man was Jesus;
For Jews hated him and have done him to death.
I would have lengthened his life for I believed, if he died,
That his soul would suffer no sin in his sight.
For the body, while it on bones went about was ever
To save men from sin if they themselves would.
And now I see where a soul cometh hitherward sailing
With glory and with great light God it is, I know well.
I advise we flee,' quoth he 'fast all hence;
For us were better not be than abide his sight.
For thy lies, Lucifer lost is all our prey.
First through thee we fell from heaven so high;
Because we believed thy lies we leapt out all with thee,
And now for thy last lie lost we have Adam,

And all our lordship, I believe on land and on water;

Nunc princeps hujus mundi ejicietur foras.

Again the light bade unlock and Lucifer answered,

'What lord art thou?' quoth Lucifer '*quis est iste?*'

'*Rex glorie*' the light soon said,

'And lord of might and of main and all manner of virtues; *dominus virtutum;*

Dukes of this dim place anon undo these gates,

That Christ may come in the king's son of heaven.'

And with that breath Hell broke and Belial's bars;

Inspite of wight or ward wide open the gates.

Patriarchs and prophets *populus in tenebris,*

Sang Saint John's song '*ecce agnus Dei.*'

Lucifer might not look so light him blinded;

And those that our Lord loved into his light he took,

And said to Satan, 'lo! here my soul to amend

For all sinful souls to save those that be worthy.

Mine they be and of me I may the better them claim.

Although reason record and right of myself,

That if they eat the apple all should die,

I promised them not here Hell for ever.

For the deed that they did thy deceit it made;

With guile thou them got against all reason.

For in my palace, paradise in person of an adder,

Falsely thou fetchest thence thing that I loved.

Thus like a lizard with a lady's visage,

Like a thief thou me robbest the old law granteth,

That beguilers be beguiled and that is good reason;

Dentem pro dente, et oculum pro oculo.

Ergo, soul shall soul quit and sin drive out sin,

And all that man hath misdone I, man, will amend.

Member for member by the old law made amends,

And life for life also and by that law I claim it,

Adam and all his issue at my will hereafter.

And what death in them undid my death shall relieve,

And both quicken and purchase what was destroyed through sin;

And that grace guile destroy good faith it asketh.

So believe it not, Lucifer that against the law I fetch them,

But by right and by reason ransom here my lieges:

Non veni solvere legem, sed adimplere.

Thou fetchest mine from my place against all reason,

Falsely and feloniously good faith me it taught,
 To recover them through ransom and by no reason else,
 So what with guile thou got through grace it is won.
 Thou, Lucifer, in likeness of a wicked adder,
 Got by guile those that God loved;
 And I, in likeness of a man that lord am of Heaven,
 Graciously thy guile have requited go guile against guile!
 And as Adam and all through a tree died,
 Adam and all through a tree shall turn again to life;
 And guile is beguiled and in his guile fallen:

Et cecidit in foveam quam fecit.

Now beginneth thy guile against thee to turn,
 And my grace to grow ever greater and wider.
 The bitterness that thou hast brewed enjoy it thyself,
 That art doctor of death drink what thou madest!

‘For I, that am lord of life love is my drink,
 And for that drink today I died upon earth.
 I fought so, I thirst yet for man’s soul’s sake;
 May no drink me moist nor my thirst slake,
 Till the vintage fall in the vale of Jehoshaphat,
 And I drink right ripe must *resurrectio mortuorum*,
 And then shall I come as a king crowned with angels,
 And have out of Hell all men’s souls.

‘Fiends and fiendkins before me shall stand,
 And be at my bidding wheresoe’er me liketh.
 And to be merciful to man then my nature asketh;
 For we be bretheren of blood but not in baptism all.
 But all that be my whole bretheren in blood and in baptism,
 Shall not be damned to the death that is without end;

Tibi soli peccavi, etc.

It is not the custom on earth to hang a felon
 More than once though he were a traitor.¹
 And if the king of that kingdom come in that time,
 Where the felon suffer should death or otherwise,
 Law wills, he give him life if he looked on him.
 And I, that am king of kings shall come in such a time,
 Where judgement to the death damneth all wicked;
 And if law wills I look on them it lieth in my grace,
 Whether they die or die not for what they did ill.
 Be it anything ransomed the boldness of their sins,

¹ See page 207.

I may do mercy through righteousness and all my words true.
And though holy writ wills that I be avenged on them that did ill,

Nullum malum impunitum, etc.

They shall be cleansed clearly and washed of their sins
In my prison Purgatory till *parce* is called,
And my mercy shall be showed to many of my bretheren.
For blood may suffer blood both hungry and a'cold,
But blood may not see blood bleed, without pity.

Audivi arcana verba, quae non licet homini loqui.

But my righteousness and right shall rule all Hell,
And mercy all mankind before me in Heaven.
For I were an unkind king unless I my kindred helped,
And above all at such need when help needs must come;

Non intres in iudicium cum servo tuo, Domine.

Thus by law,' quoth our Lord 'lead I will from hence
Those that me loved and believed in my coming.
And for thy lying, Lucifer that thou told to Eve,
Thou shalt abide it bitterly' and bound him with chains.
Ashtoreth and all the rout hid them in corners,
They dared not look on our Lord the boldest of them all,
But let him lead forth what he liked and allowed him what he pleased.

Many hundreds of angels harped and sung,

Culpat caro, purgat caro; regnat Deus Dei caro.

Then piped Peace of poesy a note,
'*Clarior est solito post maxima nebula Phoebus,*
Post inimicitias clarior est et amor.

After sharp showers,' quoth Peace 'most glorious is the sun;
Is no weather warmer than after watery clouds.

Nor no love dearer nor dearer friends,
Than after war and woe when Love and Peace be masters.
Was never war in this world nor wickedness so keen,
That Love, if he pleased could not bring to laughter,
And Peace through patience all perils stopped.'

'Truce,' quoth Truth 'thou tellest us soth, by Jesus!
Clip we in covenant and each of us kiss the other!'
'And let no people,' quoth Peace 'perceive that we chid!
For impossible is no thing to him that is almighty.'
'Thou sayest soth,' said Righteousness and reverently her kissed,
Peace, and Peace her *per saecula saeculorum.*

Misericordia et veritas obviaverunt sibi; justitia et pax osculatae sunt.

Truth trumpeted then, and sang '*Te Deum laudamus*';

And then played Love the lute in a loud note,

Ecce quam bonum et jocundum, etc.

Till the day dawned these damsels danced,
That men rang in the resurrection and right with that I waked,
And called Kit my wife and Calot my daughter—
'Arise and reverence God's resurrection,
And creep to the cross on knees and kiss it for a jewel! ¹
For God's blessed body it bore for our saving,
And it frighteneth the fiend for such is the might,
May no grisly ghost glide near its shadow!'

¹ See page 208.

PASSUS XIX

THUS I awoke and wrote what I had dreamed,
And dressed me neatly and went me to church,
To hear holy the Mass and to be houseled after.
In midst of the Mass when men went to the offering,
I fell again asleep and suddenly I dreamed,
That Piers the Plowman was painted all bloody,
And come in with a cross before the common people,
And right like in all limbs to our Lord Jesu;
And then called I Conscience to teach me the truth.
'Is this Jesus the Jousting?' quoth I 'that Jews did to death?
Or it is Piers the Plowman who painted him so red?'
Quoth Conscience, and kneeled then 'these are Piers' arms,
His colours and his coat armour but he that cometh so bloody
Is Christ with his cross conqueror of Christians.'
'Why call ye him Christ?' quoth I 'since Jews call him Jesus?
Patriarchs and prophets prophesied before,
That all kind of creatures should kneel and bow,
Anon as men named the name of God Jesus.
Ergo there is no name like to the name of Jesus.
Nor none so needful to name by night or by day.
For all dark devils are adread to hear it,
And the sinful are solaced and saved by that name,
And ye call him Christ for what cause, tell me?
Is Christ more of might and more worthy name
Than Jesu or Jesus that all our joy came of?'
'Thou knowest well,' quoth Conscience 'if thou canst reason,
That knight, king, conqueror may be one person.
To be called a knight is fair for men shall kneel to him;
To be called a king is fairer for he may knights make;
But to be conqueror called that cometh of special grace,
And of hardiness of heart and of courtesy both,
To make lords of lads in land that he winneth,
And free men foul thralls that follow not his laws.
The Jews, that were gentlemen Jesu they despised,

Both his lore and his law now are they low churls.
 As wide as the world is liveth there none
 But under tribute and tax as tykes and churls.
 And those that become Christians by counsel of the Baptist,
 Are franklins, free men through baptism that they took,
 And gentlemen with Jesu for Jesus was baptised,
 And upon Calvary on cross crowned King of Jews.

‘It becometh to a king to keep and to defend,
 And conqueror of conquest his laws and his bounty.
 And so did Jesus the Jews he justified and taught them
 The law of life that last shall ever;
 And defended from foul evils fevers and fluxes,
 And from fiends that in them were and false belief.
 Then was he Jesus of Jews called gentle prophet,
 And king of their kingdom and crown bore of thorns.
 And then conquered he on cross as conqueror noble;
 Might no death him undo nor down bring,
 So that he arose and reigned and ravished hell.
 And then was he conqueror called of quick and of dead;
 For he gave Adam and Eve and others more bliss,
 That long had lain before as Lucifer’s churls.

‘And then he gave largely all his loyal lieges
 Places in paradise at their going hence,
 He may well be called conqueror and that is the meaning of
 Christ.¹

But the cause that he cometh thus with cross of his passion,
 Is to teach us therewith that when we be tempted,
 Therewith to fight and defend us from falling into sin,
 And see by his sorrow that whoso loveth joy,
 To penance and to poverty he must put himself,
 And much woe in this world accept and suffer.

‘But to speak more of Christ and how he came to that name,
 Truly for to speak his first name was Jesus.
 When he was born in Bethlehem as the Book telleth,
 And came to take manhood kings and angels
 Reverenced him fair with riches of earth.
 Angels out of heaven came kneeling and sang,

Gloria in excelsis Deo, etc.

Kings came after kneeled, and offered
 Myrrh and much gold without thanks asking,

¹ See page 208.

Or any kind of gift but acknowledging him sovereign
Both of sand, sun, and sea and after they went
To their kings' country by counsel of angels.
And then was that word fulfilled the which thou speakest of;

Omnia caelestia, terrestria, flectantur in hoc nomine Jesu.

For all the angels of heaven at his birth kneeled,
And all the wisdom of the world was in those three kings;
Reason and righteousness and pity they offered;
Wherefore and why wise men that time,
Masters and lettered men *Magi* them called.
The one king came with reason signified by incense.
The second king then truly offered
Righteousness under red gold reason's fellow.
Gold is likened to loyalty that last shall ever,
And reason to rich gold to right and to truth.
The third king then came kneeling to Jesu,
And presented him with pity appearing as myrrh;
For myrrh is mercy in meaning and mild speech of tongue.
Three like honest things were offered thus at once,
Through three kin kings kneeling to Jesu.

But for all these precious presents our Lord Prince Jesus
Was neither king nor conqueror till he began to grow
In the manner of a man and that by much skill;
As it becometh a conqueror to know many skills,
And many wiles and wit that will be a leader;
And so did Jesu in his days whoso had time to tell it.
Some time he suffered and some time he hid him;
And some time he fought fast and fled other whiles.
And sometimes he gave good and granted health both,
Life and limb as he pleased, he wrought.
As right is in a conqueror so began Jesu,
Till he had all them that he bled for.

'In his youth this Jesus at Jews' feast
Water into wine turned as holy writ telleth,
And there began God of his grace to Do-well.
For wine is likened to law and life of holiness;
And law lacked then for men loved not their enemies.
And Christ counselleth thus and commandeth both,
Both to learned and unlearned to love our enemies.
So at feast first as I before told,
Began God, of his grace and goodness, to Do-well:

And then was he named and called not holy Christ, but Jesu,
A child fine, full of wit *filius Mariae*.
For before his mother Mary made he that wonder,
That she first and foremost firm should believe,
That he through grace was begot and of no person else.
He wrought that by no wit but through word one,
According to the kind he came of there began he Do-well.
And when he was waxed more in his mother's absence,
He made lame to leap and gave light to blind,
And fed with two fishes and with five loaves
Sore hungered folk more than five thousand.
Thus he comforted the sorrowful and won a greater name,
The which was Do-better wherever that he went.
For deaf through his deeds to hear and dumb to speak he made,
And all he healed and helped that him of grace asked.
And then was he called in country of the common people,
For the deeds that he did *fili David, Jesus!*
For David was doughtiest of deeds in his time,
The maidens then sang *Saul interfecit mille, et David decem millia*;
Therefore the country where Jesu came called him *fili David*,
And named him of Nazareth and no man so worthy
To be caesar or king of the kingdom of Juda,
Over Jews a justice as Jesus was, they thought.
Whereof Caiphaz had envy and other of the Jews,
And for to do him to death day and night they cast about;
Killed him on cross at Calvary on Friday,
And then buried his body and bid that men should
Keep it from night comers with knights armed,
For no friends should him fetch for prophets them told,
That that blessed body from sepulchre should rise,
And go into Galilee and gladden his apostles,
And his mother Mary thus men before deemed.
The knights that kept it confessed it themselves,
That angels and archangels ere the day dawned,
Came kneeling to the corpse and sang, "*Christus resurgens*"
Very man before them all and forth with them he went.
The Jews prayed them peace and besought the knights
To tell the commons that there came a company of his apostles,
And bewitched them as they woke and away stole it.
But Mary Magdalen met him by the way,
Going towards Galilee in godhead and manhood,

And alive and looking and she aloud cried,
 In each company where she came "*Christus resurgens!*"
 Thus came it out that Christ overcame recovered and lived;

Sic oportet Christum pati, et intrare, etc.;

For what women know may not well be judged!
 Peter perceived all this and pursued after,
 Both James and John Jesu for to seek,
 Thaddeus and ten more with Thomas of India.¹
 And as all these wise wights were together,
 In a house all shut and their door barred,
 Christ came in, and all closed both door and gates,
 To Peter and to his apostles and said "*pax vobis!*"
 And took Thomas by the hand and taught him to grope,
 And feel with his fingers his fleshly heart.
 Thomas touched it and with his tongue said,

"Deus meus et dominus meus.

Thou art my lord, I believe God, lord Jesu!
 Thou died and death suffered and judge shall us all,
 And now art living and looking and last shall ever!"
 Christ spoke then and courteously said,
 "Thomas, because thou trowest this and truly believest it,
 Blessed thou be and be shalt for ever.

And blessed they all be in body and in soul,
 That never shall see me in sight as thou dost now,
 And loyally believe all this I love them and bless them;

Beati qui non viderunt, et crediderunt, etc."

'And when this deed was done Do-best he taught,
 And gave Piers power and pardon he granted
 To all manner of men mercy and forgiveness,
 And might to absolve of all manner of sins,
 Under covenant that they come and recognition pay,
 To Piers' pardon the Plowman *redde quod debes.*
 Thus hath Piers power be his pardon payed,
 To bind and to unbind both here and elsewhere,
 And absolve men from all sins save of debt alone.
 Anon after on high up into heaven
 He went, and dwells there and will come at last,
 And reward him right well that *reddit quod debet*—
 Payeth perfectly as pure truth wills.
 And what person payeth it not to punish he thinketh,

¹ See page 208.

And judge them at doomsday both quick and dead;
 The good to the Godhead and to great joy,
 And wicked to dwell in woe without end.
 Thus Conscience of Christ and of the cross spoke,
 And counselled me to kneel thereto and then came, methought,
 One *Spiritus Paraclitus* to Piers and to his fellows;
 In likeness of a lightning he alighted on them all,
 And made them understand and know all kinds of language.
 I wondered what that was and shook Conscience,
 And was afeared of the light for in fire's likeness
Spiritus Paraclitus over-spread them all.

Quoth Conscience, and kneeled 'this is Christ's messenger,
 And cometh from the great God and Grace is his name.
 Know now,' quoth Conscience 'and if thou canst sing,
 Welcome him and worship him with "*Veni, Creator Spiritus.*"'
 Then sung I that song and so did many hundred,
 And cried with Conscience 'help us, God of grace!'
 And then began Grace to go with Piers Plowman,
 And counselled him and Conscience the commons to summon—
 'For I will deal today and divide grace,
 To all kind of creatures that have their five wits,
 Treasure to live by to their lives' end,
 And a weapon to fight with that will never fail.
 For Antichrist and his own all the world shall grieve,
 And encumber thee, Conscience unless Christ thee help.
 And false prophets many flatterers and liars
 Shall come, and be masters over kings and earls,
 And Pride shall be pope prince of holy church,
 Covetousness and Unkindness cardinals him to lead.
 Therefore,' quoth Grace, 'ere I go I will give you treasure,
 And a weapon to fight with when Antichrist you assaileth.'
 And gave each man a grace to guide himself with,
 That idleness encumber him not envy, nor pride,

Divisiones gratiarum sunt, etc.

Some he gave wit with words to show,
 Wit to win their livelihood with as the world asketh,
 As preachers and priests and prentices of law,
 They honestly to live by labour of tongue,
 And by wit to show others as Grace them would teach.
 And some he taught craft and cunning of sight,
 With selling and buying their livelihood to win,

And some he taught to labour a loyal life and a true,
 And some he taught to till to ditch and to thatch,
 To win with it their livelihood by lore of his teaching.
 And some to divine and divide numbers to know;
 And some to compass craftily and colours to make;
 And some to see and to say what should befall,
 Both of well and of woe tell it ere it fell,
 As astronomers through astronomy and philosophers wise.
 And some to ride and recover what unrightfully was won;
 He taught them to win it again through quickness of hands,
 And fetch it from false men with Folville's laws.¹
 And some he taught to live in longing to be hence,
 In poverty and in penitence to pray for all Christians.
 And all he taught to be loyal and each craft love the other,
 And forbade them all strife that none is among them.
 'Though some be cleaner than some ye see well,' quoth Grace,
 'That he that useth the fairest craft to the foulest I could have put
 him,

Think all,' quoth Grace 'that grace cometh as my gift;
 Look that none blame other but love all as bretheren.
 And who that most masteries has be mildest of bearing,
 And crown Conscience king and make Craft your steward,
 And after Craft's counsel clothe you and feed.
 For I make Piers the Plowman my proctor and my reeve,
 And registrar to receive *redde quod debes*.
 My purveyor and my plowman Piers shall be on earth,
 And for to till truth a team shall he have.'

Grace gave Piers a team four great oxen;
 The one was Luke, a large beast and a mild faced,
 And Mark, and Matthew the third mighty beasts both,
 And joined to them one John most gentle of all,
 The prize ox of Piers' plow passing all other.

And Grace gave Piers of his goodness, four horses,
 All that his oxen plowed they were to harrow after.
 One was called Austin and Ambrose another,
 Gregory the great clerk and Jerome the good;
 These four, the faith to teach follow Piers' team,
 And harrowed in a hand's space all holy scripture,
 With two harrows that they had an old and a new,

Id est, vetus testamentum et novum.

¹ See page 208.

And Grace gave grain the cardinal virtues,
And sowed them in man's soul and then he told their names.
Spiritus prudentiae the first seed was called,
And whoso ate that imagine he should,
Ere he did any deed devise well the end;
And taught men a ladle to buy with a long handle,
That mean for to keep a crock to save the fat on top.

The second seed was called *spiritus temperantiae*.
He that ate of that seed had such a nature,
Should never meat nor much drink make him to swell,
Nor should no scorner nor scold our of reason him bring,
Nor winning, nor wealth of worldly riches,
Waste words of idleness nor wicked speech move;
Should no curious cloth come on his back,
Nor no meat in his mouth that Master John spiced.

The third seed that Piers sowed was *spiritus fortitudinis*.
And whoso ate of that seed hardy was ever
To suffer all that God sent sickness and miseries;
Might no falsehood nor liar nor loss of worldly goods
Make for him any mourning that he was not merry in soul,
And bold and abiding revilings to suffer,
And playeth all with patience *et parce mihi, Domine*,
And covered him under the counsel of Cato the wise;
Esto forti animo, cum sis damnatus inique.

The fourth seed that Piers sowed was *spiritus justitiae*,
And he that ate of that seed should be ever true
With God, and not afraid save of guile alone.
For guile goeth so privily that good faith at times
May not be espied by *spiritus justitiae*.
Spiritus justitiae spareth not to over-spill
Them that be guilty and for to correct
The king, if he fall into guilt or in trespass.
For counteth he no king's wrath when he in court sitteth
To judge as a judge adread was he never,
Neither of duke nor of death that he administered not the law,
For present or for prayer or any prince's letters;
He gives equity to all according to his power.

These four seeds Piers sowed and then he did them harrow
With old law and new law that love might grow
Among the four virtues and vices destroy.
For commonly in countries rest harrow and weeds

Foul the fruit in the field where they grow together;
And so do vices virtues worthy.

Quoth Piers, 'harrow all that have common wit by counsel of these
doctors,

And till according to their teaching the cardinal virtues.'

'When thy grains,' quoth Grace 'begin for to ripen,
Build thee a house, Piers to harbour in thy corn.'

'By God! Grace,' quoth Piers 'you must give timber,
And build that house ere you hence wend.'

And Grace gave him the cross with the crown of thorns,

That Christ upon Calvary for mankind suffered on,

And of his baptism and blood that he bled on rood

He made a kind of mortar and Mercy it was called.

And therewith Grace began to make a good foundation,

And wattled it and walled it with his pains and his passion,

And of all holy writ he made a roof after,

And called that house Unity Holy Church in English.

And when this deed was done Grace devised

A cart, called Christendom to carry Piers' sheaves;

And gave him horses to his cart Contrition and Confession,

And made Priesthood overseer the while himself went

As wide as the world is with Piers to till truth.

Now is Piers to the plow and Pride it espied,

And gathered him a great host to grieve he thinketh

Conscience and all Christians and cardinal virtues,

Blow them down and break them and bite asunder the roots;

And sent forth Arrogance his serjeant at arms,

And his spy Spill-love one Speak-evil-secretly.

These two came to Conscience and to Christian people,

And told them tidings 'that lay waste they should the seeds,

That Piers there had sown the cardinal virtues;

And Piers' barn will be broken and they that be in Unity

Shall come out, and Conscience and your two horses,

Confession and Contrition and your cart the Faith

Shall be coloured so quaintly and covered under our sophistry,

That Conscience shall not know by Contrition,

Nor by Confession who is Christian or heathen,

Nor no manner of merchant that with money dealeth,

Whether he win by honesty or by wrong or by usury.

With such colours and cunning cometh Pride armed,

With the lord that liveth after the lust of the body,

To waste, on fine living and on wicked keeping,
All the world in a while through our wit,' quoth Pride.

Quoth Conscience to all Christians then 'my counsel is to wend
Hastily into Unity and hold we us there,
And pray we that a pece were in Piers' barn the Plowman.
For truly I wot well we be not of strength
To go against Pride unless Grace be with us.'
And then came Kind Wit Conscience to teach,
And cried and commanded all Christian people,
For to delve a ditch deep about Unity,
So that Holy Church stood on Unity as it a pile were.
Conscience commanded then all Christians to delve,
And make a great moat that might be a strength,
To help Holy Church and them that it keepeth.
Then all kinds of Christians save common women,
Repented and refused sin save they alone;
And false men, flatterers usurers and thieves,
Liars and inquest mongers that were forsworn oft,
Wittingly and wilfully with the false held,
And for silver were forsworn truly they knew it.
There was no Christian creature that kind wit had,
Save shrews alone such as I spake of,
That did not help a quantity holiness to increase.
Some through bead bidding and some through pilgrimage,
And others private penance and some through alms giving.
And then welled water for wicked works,
Bitterly running out of men's eyes.
Cleanness of the commons and clerks' clean living
Made Unity Holy Church in holiness to stand.
'I care not,' quoth Conscience 'though Pride come now,
The lord of lust shall be stopped all this Lent, I hope.
Come,' quoth Conscience 'ye Christians, and dine,
That have laboured loyally all this Lent time.
Here is bread blessed and God's body thereunder.
Grace through God's word gave Piers power,
And might to make it and men to eat it after,
In help of their health once in a month,
Or as oft as they had need those that had payed
To Piers' pardon the Plowman *redde quod debes.*
'How?' quoth all the commons 'thou counselled us to yield
All that we owe any wight are we going to housel?'

'That is my counsel,' quoth Conscience 'and cardinal virtues,
That each man forgive other and that wills the *pater noster*,

Et dimitte nobis debita nostra, etc.,

And so to be absolved and then be houseled.'

'Yea, bah!' quoth a brewer 'I will not be ruled,
By Jesu! for all your jangling with *spiritus justitie*,
Nor according to Conscience, by Christ while I can sell
Both dregs and draff and draw it at a hole,
Thick ale and thin ale for that is my nature,
And not hack after holiness hold thy tongue, Conscience.
Of *spiritus justitie* thou speakest much idly!'

'Caitiff,' quoth Conscience 'cursed wretch!

Unblessed art thou, brewer unless thee God help;

Unless thou live by lore of *spiritus justitie*,

The chief seed that Piers sowed saved wilt thou be never.

Unless Conscience the commons feed and cardinal virtues,

Believe it well they be lost both life and soul.'

'Then is many man lost,' quoth an ignorant vicar,

'I am a pastor of Holy Church and came never in my time

Man to me, that me could tell of cardinal virtues,

Or that accounted Conscience at a cock's feather or a hen's!

I knew never cardinal that came not from the pope,

And we clerks, when they come for their provisions pay,

For their fur and their palfreys' meat and pillagers that them follow.

The commons *clamat cotidie* each man to other,

"The country is the curseder that cardinals come in;

And where they lie and linger most lechery there reigneth:"—

Therefore,' quoth this vicar 'by very God, I would

That no cardinal come among the common people,

But in their holiness hold them still

At Avignon, among the Jews *cum sancto sanctus eris, etc.,*

Or in Rome, as their rule will the relics to keep;

And thou, Conscience, in king's court and should never come thence,

And Grace, that thou praisest so guide of all clerks,

And Piers with his new plow and also with his old,

Emperor of all the world and that all men were Christian!

Imperfect is that pope that all people should help,

And sends them that slay such as he should save;

And well for Piers the Plowman that pursueth God in doing,

Qui pluit super justos et injustos at once,

And sends the sun to save a cursed man's tilth,

As bright as to the best man and to the best woman.
Right so Piers the Plowman works to till
As well for a waster and wenches of the stews,
As for himself and his servants save that he is first served;
And travailleth and tilleth for a traitor as hard
As for a true honest man all times alike.
And worshipped be he that wrought all both good and wicked,
And suffereth the sinful till some time that they repent.
And God amend the pope that pillages Holy Church,
And claimeth before the king to be keeper over Christians,
Yet counteth not though Christians be killed and robbed,
And finds folk to fight and Christian blood to spill,
Against the old law and new as Luke thereof witnesseth,
Non occides: mihi vindictam, etc.

It seemeth, if so he had his will,
That he reckoneth right naught of all the remnant.
And Christ of his courtesy the cardinals save,
And turn their minds to wisdom and to weal of soul!
For the commons,' quoth this curate 'count full little
The counsel of Conscience or cardinal virtues,
Unless they see by sight something to win;
Of guile nor of lying care they never a jot.
For *spiritus prudentiae* among the people, is guile,
And all those fair virtues as vices they seem;
Each man devises a sleight sin for to hide,
And disguises it as a clever and a clean living.'

Then laughed there a lord and 'by this light,' said,
'I hold it right and reason of my reeve to take
All that mine auditor or else my steward
Counselles me by their account and my clerk's writing.
With *spiritus intellectus* they seek the reeve's rolls,
And with *spiritus fortitudinis* fetch it I will.'

And then came there a king and of his crown said,
'I am king with crown the commons to rule,
And Holy Church and clergy from cursed men to defend.
And if me lacketh to live by the law wills I take it,
Where I may soonest it have for I am head of law;
For ye be but members and I above all.
And since I am head of you all I am health of you all,
And Holy Church's chief help and chieftain of the commons.
And what I take of you two I take it at teaching

Of *spiritus justitiae* for I judge you all;
So I may boldly be houseled for I borrow never,
Nor crave of my commons but as my status asks.'
'On condition,' quoth Conscience 'that thou canst defend
And rule thy realm in reason right well, and in truth,
Take thou may in reason as thy law asketh;

Omnia tua sunt ad defendum, sed non ad depraedandum.'
The vicar had far to go home and fair took his leave,
And I awakened therewith and wrote as I had dreamed.

PASSUS XX

THEN as I went by the way when I was thus awaked,
 Heavy-cheered I journeyed and sad in heart;
 I knew not where to eat nor at what place.
 And it came nigh the noon and with Need I met,
 That affronted me foully and deceiver me called.
 'Could'st thou not excuse thee as did the king and others,
 That thou took for thy livelihood for clothes and for sustenance,
 As by teaching and by telling of *spiritus temperantiae*,
 And thou seized no more than Need thee taught,
 And need hath no law nor never shall fall in debt?
 For three things he taketh his life for to save,
 That is, meat, when men him denieth as he no money wieldeth,
 Nor none will be his surety nor pledge hath none to lay.
 And he takes in that case and comes thereto by sleight,
 He sinneth not truly that so winneth his food.
 And though he come so to clothes and can have no better bargain,
 Need right at once takes him under surety.
 And if he wishes to lap the law of kind wills
 That he drink at each ditch ere he for thirst died.
 So Need, at great need may take him as for his own,
 Without counsel of Conscience or cardinal virtues,
 As long as he follow and guard *spiritus temperantiae*.
 For is no virtue by far like *spiritus temperantiae*,
 Neither *spiritus justitiae* nor *spiritus fortitudinis*.
 For *spiritus fortitudinis* fails full oft,
 He shall do more than measure many time and oft,
 And beat men over bitterly and some of them too little,
 And grieves men greater than good faith wishes.
 And *spiritus justitiae* shall judge, willy nilly,
 After the king's counsel and the commons' will.
 And *spiritus prudentiae* in many a point shall fail
 In what he thinks will happen if it were not for his wit.
 Weening is no wisdom nor wise imagination,
Homo proponit et Deus disponit and governeth all good virtues.
 But Need is next to him for anon he makes men meek,

And as low as a lamb for the lack of what they need.
 Wise men forsook wealth for they would be needy,
 And dwelt in wilderness and would not be rich.
 And God all his great joy in heaven he left,
 And came and took manhood and became needy.
 So needy he was, as saith the Book in many sundry places,
 That he said in his sorrow on the rood itself,¹
 "Both fox and fowl may fly to hole and creep,
 And the fish hath fin to swim with to rest,
 But need hath seized me so that I must need abide,
 And suffer sorrow's full sorrow that shall to joy turn."
 Therefore be not abashed to beg and to be needy;
 Since he that made all the world was by will needy,
 Nor never none so needy nor poorer died.'

When Need had corrected me thus anon I fell asleep,
 And dreamed full marvellously that, in man's form,
 Antichrist came then and all the crop of truth
 Turned it upside-down and overturned the root,
 And made falsehood spring and spread and increased men's needs;
 In each country where he came he cut away truth,
 And made guile grow there as he a god were.
 Friars followed that fiend for he gave them copes,
 And religious revered him and rang their bells,
 And all the convent forth came to welcome that tyrant,
 And all his as well as him save only fools;
 Which fools were well liefer to die than to live
 Longer, since loyalty was so rebuked.
 And a false fiend Antichrist over all folk reigned;
 And those who were mild men and holy and no mischief feared,
 Defied all falseness and folk that it used;
 And whatever king them supported knowing them any while,
 They cursed, and their counsellors whether clerk or unlearned.

Antichrist had thus soon hundreds at his banner,
 And Pride it bore boldly about,
 With a lord that liveth after liking of body,
 That came against Conscience that keeper was and guide
 Over Christian people and cardinal virtues.
 'I counsel,' quoth Conscience then 'come with me, ye fools,
 Into Unity Holy Church and hold we us there,
 And cry we to Nature that he come and defend us,

¹ See page 208.

Fools, from this fiend's limbs for Piers' love the Plowman.
And cry we to all the commons that they come to Unity,
And there abide and bicker against Belial's children.'

Nature Conscience then heard and came out of the planets,
And sent forth his messengers fevers and fluxes,
Coughs and spasms cramps and toothaches,
Rheums and running sores and dirty scabs,
Boils and swellings and burning agues;
Frenzies and foul evils foragers of Nature,
Had pricked and preyed upon the polls of people,
That fully a legion lost their lives soon.
There was—'harrow and help! here cometh Nature,
With Death that is dreadful to undo us all!'
The lord that lived after lust then aloud cried
After Comfort, a knight to come and bear his banner.
'Alarm! alarm!' quoth that lord 'each man for himself!'
And then encountered these men ere minstrels might pipe,
And ere heralds at arms had named the champions.

Age the hoary he was in the vanguard,
And bore the banner before Death by right he it claimed.
Nature came after with many keen sores,
As pox and pestilences and many people destroyed;
So Nature through corruptions killed full many.
Death came driving after and all to dust pashed
Kings and knights caesars and popes;
Learned nor ignorant he let no man stand,
Those he hit evenly never stirred after.
Many a lovely lady and lovers of knights
Swooned and died for sorrow of Death's blows.

Conscience of his courtesy to Nature besought
To cease and hold and see whether they would
Leave Pride privily and be perfect Christians.
And Nature ceased then to see the people amend.
Fortune began to flatter then those few that were alive,
And promised them long life and Lechery he sent
Amongst all manner of men wedded and unwedded,
And gathered a great host all against Conscience.
This Lechery laid on with a laughing cheer,
And with privy speech and painted words,
And armed him with idleness and with high bearing.
He bore a bow in his hand and many bloody arrows,

Were feathered with fair promise and many a false truth.
And with his low tales he troubled full oft
Conscience and his company of Holy Church the teachers.

Then came Covetousness and cast about how he might
Overcome Conscience and cardinal virtues,
And armed him in avarice and greedily lived.
His weapon was all wiles to win and to hide;
With lyings and with deceits he beguiled the people.
Simony sent him to assail Conscience,
And he preached to the people and prelates they made,
To hold with Antichrist their temporal power to save;
And he came to the king's counsel as a bold baron,
And kneeled to Conscience in court before them all,
And made Good Faith flee and False to abide,
And boldly bore down with many a bright noble
Much of the wit and wisdom of Westminster hall.
He jogged to a justice and jousted in his ear,
And overturned all his truth with 'take-this-recompense.'
And to the court of the arches hastily he went anon after,
And turned civil law into simony and then won over the official;
For a mantle of miniver he made true matrimony
Depart ere death came and divorces made.

'Alas!' quoth Conscience, and cried then 'would Christ, of his
grace,
That Covetousness were Christian that is so keen a fighter,
And bold and abiding while his purse lasteth!'
And then laughed Life and had his clothes decorated,
And armed him in haste in worthless words,
And held Holiness a joke and Kindness a waster,
And looked on Loyalty as a churl and Liar a free man;
Conscience and counsel he counted it folly.
Thus rallied Life at a little fortune,
And pricked forth with Pride praiseth he no virtue,
He careth not how Nature slew and shall come at last,
And kill all earthly creatures save Conscience alone.
Life leapt aside and took him a lover,
'Health and I,' quoth he 'and highness of heart
Shall make thee dread not either Death or Age,
And to forget sorrow and care naught of sin.'
This Life liked and his lover Fortune,
And they begot in their glory a vagabond at last,

One that much woe wrought Sloth was his name.
 Sloth waxed wondrous fast and soon was of age,
 And wedded one Wanhope a wench of the stewes;
 Her sire was a jury-man that never swore truth,
 One Thomas Two-tongue attainted at each inquest.
 This Sloth was wary in war and a sling made,
 And threw dread of despair a dozen miles around.
 For care Conscience then cried upon Age,
 And bade him try to fight and frighten Wanhope.

And Age took good hope and hastily shifted himself,
 And waved away Wanhope and with Life he fighteth.
 And Life fled for fear to Physic for help,
 And besought him for succour and of salve had,
 And gave him gold, good measure that gladdened his heart
 And they gave him in return a glass hood.
 Life believed that leech-craft would stay Age,
 And drive away Death with medicines and drugs.

And Age adventured against Life and at last he hit
 A physician with a furred hood so that he fell into a palsy
 And there died that doctor ere three days after.

'Now I see,' said Life 'that surgery nor physick
 May not a mite avail to meddle against Age.'
 And in hope of his health good heart he took,
 And rode so to Revel a rich place and a merry;
 The company of comfort men called it sometimes.

And Age came anon after me and over my head went,
 And made me bald in front and bare on the crown,
 So hard he went over my head it will be seen ever.

'Sir evil-taught Age,' quoth I 'ill ways go with thee!
 Since when was the way over men's heads?

Had'st thou been polite,' quoth I 'thou would'st have asked leave!'

'Yea! dear lazy-bones!' quoth he and laid on me with age,

And hit me under the ear hardly can I hear;

He buffeted me about the mouth and beat out my teeth,

And fettered me in gout I may not go at large.

And of the woe that I was in my wife had pity,

And wished full well that I were in heaven.

For the limb that she loved me for and glad was to feel,

On nights indeed when we naked were,

I might not in no manner make it serve her will,

So Age and she truly had it enfeebled.

And as I sat in this sorrow I saw how Nature passed,
And Death drew nigh me for dread I began to quake,
And cried to Nature out of care me to bring.
'Lo! Age the hoary hath me beset,
Avenge me, if your will be for I would be hence.'
'If thou wilt be avenged wend into Unity,
And hold thee there ever till I send for thee,
And look thou learn some craft ere thou come thence.'
'Counsel me, Nature,' quoth I 'what craft is best to learn?'
'Learn to love,' quoth Nature 'and leave all others.'
'How shall I come to goods so to clothe me and to feed?'
'If thou love truly,' quoth he 'lack shall thee never
Meat nor worldly weeds while thy life lasteth.'
And there, by counsel of Nature I began to roam
Through Contrition and Confession till I came to Unity;
And there was Conscience constable Christians to save,
And it was besieged sothly with seven great giants,
That with Antichrist held hard against Conscience.
Sloth with his sling a hard assault he made,
Proud priests came with him more than a thousand,
In cloaks and peaked shoes and pissers' long knives,
Came against Conscience with Covetousness they held.
'By Mary,' quoth a cursed priest of the march of Ireland,
'I count no more Conscience if so I catch silver,
Than I do to drink a draught of good ale!'
And so said sixty of the same country;
And shot against him with shot many a sheaf of oaths;
And broad hooked arrows God's hurt, and his nails,
And had almost Unity and holiness down.
Conscience cried, 'help Clergy, or else I fall
Through imperfect priests and prelates of holy church.'
Friars heard him cry and came him to help,
But as they knew not well their craft Conscience forsook them.
Need came then near and Conscience he told
That they come for covetousness to have cure of souls—
'And if they are poor, by chance for patrimony them lacketh,
They will flatter, to fare well folk that be rich;
And since they chose chill and low poverty,
Let them chew as they chose and charge them with no cure!
For oftener he lieth that livelihood must beg,
Than he that laboureth for livelihood and giveth to beggars.

And since friars forsook earthly felicity,
 Let them be as beggars or live by angels' food!

Conscience at this counsel then began to laugh,
 And courteously comforted them and called in all friars,
 And said, 'sirs, sothly welcome be ye all
 To Unity and Holy Church but one thing I you pray,
 Hold you in Unity and have no envy
 Of learned or of unlearned but live after your rule.
 And I will be your bail ye shall have bread and clothes,
 And other necessities enough you shall no thing lack,
 If that ye leave logic and learn for to love.

For love left they lordship both land and school,
 Friar Francis and Dominic for love to be holy,
 And if ye coveteth a cure Kind will you teach,
 That in measure God made all manner of things,
 And set them at a certain and at a fixed number,
 And named names new and numbered the stars;

Qui numerat multitudinem stellarum, et omnibus eis nomina, etc.

Kings and knights that keep and defend,
 Have officers under them and each of them numbered;
 And if they wage men to war they write them in number,
 Or will no money them pay travail they never so sore.
 All others in battle be held robbers,
 Thieves and plunderers in each place cursed.
 Monks and nuns and all men of religion
 Their order and their rule wills to have a fixed number.
 Of unlearned and of learned the law wills and asketh
 A fixed number for a certain order save only among friars!
 Therefore,' quoth Conscience, 'by Christ kind wit me telleth,
 It is wicked to pay you ye grow out of number!
 Heaven hath an even number and hell is without number;
 Therefore I would indeed that ye were in the register,
 And your number under notary's seal and neither more nor less!'

Envy heard this and bade friars go to college,
 And learn logic and law and also the contemplative life,
 And preach to men of Plato and prove it by Seneca,
 That all things under heaven ought to be in common.

And yet he lieth, as I believe that to the ignorant so preacheth,
 For God made to men a law and Moses it taught,

Non concupisces rem proximi tui.

And evil is this held in parishes of England,

For parsons and parish priests that should the people thrive,
 Be pastors called to know and to heal,
 All that be their parishioners penance to enjoin,
 And they should be ashamed at their confession but shame makes
 them go,

And flee to the friars as false folk do to Westminster,
 That borrow and bear it thither and then ask friends
 Earnestly for forgiveness or a further year's loan.
 But while he is in Westminster he will be ahead,
 And make him merry with other men's goods.
 And so it fareth with many folk that to the friars confesseth,
 As jurymen and executors they will give the friars
 A portion to pray for them and make themselves merry
 With the residue and the remnant for which other men laboured,
 And leave the dead man in debt to the day of doom.

Envy therefore hated Conscience,
 And friars for philosophy he founded them colleges
 The while Covetousness and Unkindness Conscience assailed.
 In Unity Holy Church Conscience held him,
 And made Peace porter to bar the gates
 Against all tale tellers and idle tattlers.
 Hypocrisy and he a hard battle they had.
 Hypocrisy at the gate hard began to fight,
 And wounded very wickedly many a wise teacher,
 That with Conscience accorded and with cardinal virtues.
 Conscience called a leech that could well thrive,
 'Go salve those that sick be and through sin wounded.'
 Shift shaped a sharp salve and made men do penance
 For their misdeeds that they wrought had,
 So that Piers was payed *redde quod debes*.

Some liked not this leech and letters they sent,
 If any surgeon were in the town that softer could plaster.
 Sir Lief-to-live-in-lechery lay there and groaned;
 For fasting of a Friday he behaved as he would die.
 'There is a surgeon in this town that soft can handle,
 And more of physic knows by far and fairer he plastereth;
 One friar Flatterer is physician and surgeon.'
 Quoth Contrition to Conscience 'let him come to Unity,
 For here is many a man hurt through Hypocrisy.'
 'We have no need,' quoth Conscience 'I know no better leech
 Than parson or parish priest confessor or bishop,

Save Piers the Plowman that hath power over them all,
 And indulgences may give unless debt prevent it.
 I will allow,' quoth Conscience 'since ye desire,
 That friar Flatterer be fetched and physic you sick.'

The friar heard hereof and hied fast
 To a lord for a letter leave to have to cure,
 As if a curate he were and came with his letters
 Boldly to the bishop and his brief had,
 In countries where he came into confessions to hear;
 And came where Conscience was and knocked at the gate.
 Peace unbarred it was porter of Unity,
 And in haste asked 'what his will were?'
 'In faith,' quoth this friar 'for profit and for health
 Speak I would with Contrition and therefore come I hither.
 'He is sick,' said Peace 'and so are many others,
 Hypocrisy hath hurt him full hardly will they recover.'
 'I am a surgeon,' said the man 'and salves can make;
 Conscience knoweth me well and what I can do too.'
 'I pray thee,' quoth Peace then 'ere thou pass further,
 What art thou called? I pray thee hide not thy name.'
 'Certes,' said this fellow 'sir *Penetrans-domos*.'
 'Yea, go thy ways,' quoth Peace 'by God, for all thy physic,
 Unless thou know some craft thou comest not herein!
 I knew such a one once not eight winters past,
 Came in thus coped at a court where I dwelt,
 And was my lord's leech and my lady's both.
 And at last this begging friar when my lord was out,
 He salved so our women till some were with child!'
 Mild-speech told Peace open the gates—
 'Let in the friar and his fellow and make them fair cheer.
 He may see and hear so it may befall,
 That Life through his lore shall leave Covetousness,
 And be afeared of Death and withdraw him from Pride,
 And accord with Conscience and kiss each the other.'

Thus through Mild-speech entered the friar,
 And came in to Conscience and courteously him greeted.
 'Thou art welcome,' quoth Conscience 'canst thou heal the sick?
 Here is Contrition,' quoth Conscience 'my cousin, wounded;
 Comfort him,' quoth Conscience 'and take care of his sores.
 The plasters of the parson and powders bite sore,
 He lets them lie over long and loth is to change them;

From Lent to Lent he lets his plasters bite.
'That is over long,' quoth this friar 'I believe I shall amend it';—
And goeth and graspeth Contrition and gave him a plaster
Of 'a privy payment and I shall pray for you,
For all that ye be held for all my life time,
And make you my lady in mass and in matins,
As friars of our fraternity for a little silver.'
Thus he goeth and gathereth and lieth where he shriveth,
Till Contrition had clean forgotten to cry and to weep,
And lie awake for his wicked works as he was wont to do.
For comfort of his confessor Contrition he left,
That is sovereignest salve for all kind of sins.
Sloth saw that and so did Pride,
And came with a keen will Conscience to assail.
Conscience cried then and bade Clergy help him,
And also Contrition for to keep the gate.
'He lieth and dreameth,' said Peace 'and so do many others;
The friar with his physic this folk hath enchanted,
And plastered them so pleasantly they dread no sin.'
'By Christ,' quoth Conscience then 'I will become a pilgrim,
And walk as wide as all the world lasteth,
To seek Piers the Plowman that Pride will destroy,
And that friars may have provision that for need flatter,
And oppose me, Conscience now Kind me avenge,
And send me good fortune and health till I have Piers the Plowman!'
And so he cried after grace till I began to wake.

Explicit hic dialogus Petri Plowman.

NOTES

[Page 2.] *Friars.* The friars preachers: Dominicans (Black friars), Franciscans (Grey friars or friars Minor), Carmelites (White friars), and the Augustinians (Austin friars). They were mendicant, peripatetic, pastoral, and preaching clergy with certain monastic obligations, and so to be distinguished from the monks, who are not essentially priests and whose activities do not normally extend beyond the monastery walls. Langland is by no means the only medieval writer to castigate the particular abuses which their way of life and uncontrolled numbers gave rise to.

[Page 2.] *Pardoner.* A pardoner was licensed by ecclesiastical authority to preach and collect money for a specified object (e.g. to build a church or a bridge), for contributing to which a pardon (see note to page 18) was attached. This name and office was abolished entirely by the Council of Trent in 1563.

[Page 3.] *Bachelors.* Bachelors, masters, and doctors signify priests with various degrees—such as B.A., M.A., Ph.D., as we still know them—obtained from a university. The normal education of a priest was gained at a university, and the division between learning and the priesthood was hardly, in theory, conceivable; so we find Langland using 'Clergy' to signify both simultaneously. The whole idea of secular knowledge as against an especial form of priestly education has grown to its modern proportions steadily since the Renaissance, the Reformation, the scientific movement, and the reactions they produced in the Christian church.

[Page 4.] The general moral of this ancient fable of 'belling the cat' is clear. In its special application here the rats are the burgesses and weighty commons, the mice the lesser folk, the cat King Edward III, the kitten his grandson, the future Richard II.

[Page 10.] *Natural knowing.* Langland has 'kind knowing,' and a treatise could be written on the use and meaning of the word 'kind' both in medieval literature and later. It always has a connection with that which is natural and proper to the person in question as such, to a person as a man, for instance, or to God as God. 'Kind' as a noun can mean nature just, or the God who is the life of nature. Here 'kind knowing' means an instinctive knowledge, proper to a man, of the first general principles of moral action; not conscience, but the principles conscience judges by.

[Page 13.] *Meed.* Meed is reward; not necessarily a bad thing, but often misused and hence becoming something like bribery or, in a more general sense, graft.

[Page 14.] *Summoners.* Officers who called persons before the ecclesiastical courts. Such a court was the *Arches*, which is still in existence. This court dealt with such things as deciding the validity of marriages, on which only the church could pronounce, and it appears to have been particularly open to blatant bribery and corruption.

[Page 17.] *Paulines.* Referred to in medieval writing both as friars and hermits.

[Page 18.] *Pardons.* Pardons, or indulgences, originated in the early days of Christianity as remissions of the sometimes very rigorous and public penances imposed on individuals for heinous offences. In the Middle Ages, and still, they are remissions of the temporal punishment due to those sins of which the guilt has been forgiven (normally by confession and absolution), granted by

the Church and ratified by God. Because of the origin, the amount of remission is expressed in terms of time, i.e. a hundred days (originally a hundred days off your long public penance). The common medieval custom of granting indulgences in return for, say, alms-giving to some good cause, was obviously easily abused, and all such indulgences or pardons were revoked by Pope Pius V, in 1567.

[Page 25.] *Regum*. The Book of Kings.

[Page 26.] *Placebo*. A colloquial term for the Office of the Dead. 'David' in the next line means the psalms, which were commonly all ascribed to David. The psalms form a major part of the office, the daily prayer of the Church; and of course the passage is telling priests to say or sing the office as they should instead of spending their time in sport.

[Page 27.] This sort of prophecy, with its semi-magical incantation, was popular. They may or may not have been intended to be clear at the time; they certainly are not to us. This one refers to the conversion of the Jews, infidels and Mohammedans at some future date; 'the full of the moon' is the full moon of Easter, the time of our redemption.

[Page 31.] *Recordare*. A name, from the first word of the introit—the 'entering' psalm at the beginning of the Mass, which varies according to the day—from the Mass for avoidance of death and plague.

[Page 33.] *Pestilences*. A reference to the recurrent epidemics of the plague, the 'Black Death,' which decimated the population of England during the fourteenth century, causing, among other things, widespread social changes. The 'south-west wind' in the following line is usually identified with a great storm on 15th January 1362, and thus becomes a significant clue in attempts to date the poem.

[Page 33.] *Women's punishment*. This is probably the ducking-stool, the popular and uncomfortable punishment for a scold.

[Page 36.] *Diapenidion*. An emollient medicine.

[Page 36.] *Limiters and lectors*. A limiter was a friar with a limited district in which to beg. A lector is probably the holder of an academic degree, that is, a Lector in Sacred Theology.

[Page 37.] Here is no question of ordaining women. Many abbesses and prioresses of the Middle Ages exercised complete temporal jurisdiction and tried to stretch their spiritual authority to match it, especially by claiming to 'hear confessions.' These had to be restrained by church authorities.

[Page 39.] *Rood of Bromholm*. One of the many English shrines of popular pilgrimage. Walsingham is also mentioned, which is becoming a centre of pilgrimage again in the twentieth century with its increasing revival of medieval Catholic practices.

[Page 41.] '*New fair*' game. Explanations of this game seem hardly clearer than Langland's own description. It was obviously a game of barter, and was known to be highly popular.

[Page 43.] *Benedicite*. The first word of grace before meat.

[Page 44.] *Love-days*. In fact, law-days; days set apart for manorial courts, hence days of reconciliation and concord. The term 'love-days' is used commonly for any days chosen for settling disputes by arbitration.

[Page 45.] *Dismas*. The name popularly and traditionally given to the good thief on Calvary.

[Page 46.] *Suit*. That is, Christ's bodily flesh, the same suit and the same armorial device as worn by human beings.

[Page 47.] A list of the various 'trophies' brought home by pilgrims to show what shrines they had visited. Ampullas were small flasks containing

holy water—they were stamped with a sign showing the shrine they came from; such signs were the shells of Galicia and the keys of Rome. The vernicle was also commonly worn by pilgrims; it is the image of the face of our Lord from the veil of St Veronica who, traditionally, wiped the face of our Lord when he was on his way to Calvary, an impression of his countenance being left, miraculously, on the veil she used.

[Page 49.] *Waferer*. A maker of small wafers of bread and cakes.

[Page 50.] *Bull*. A papal rescript or edict.

[Page 53.] *Memento*. A prayer for the named dead in the Mass, *memento* being the first word of that prayer.

[Page 54.] *Religion*. A term used for a religious order, now obsolete; 'a religious' is still used to denote a member of a religious order.

[Page 58.] *Collops*. Apparently slices of salt meat, though it is not clear how the eggs come in.

[Page 59.] Another prophecy, with the distinction of the unconscious truth of one of its fanciful touches. About fifty years later the Maid of Orleans—Joan of Arc—did have the mastery.

[Page 60.] A pardon *a poena et a culpa* is a plenary indulgence, i.e. a remission not of part but all the temporary punishment due to forgiven sin. (See note to page 18.)

[Page 64.] *Biennials and triennials*. The saying of Masses for the dead over a period of two or three years.

[Page 66.] *Wit*. This term seldom, if ever, bears the modern meaning. It signifies intelligence, cleverness, intellectuality, brain, according to the context.

[Page 67.] *New year's gift*. The meaning here is a free gift; there seems, however, to have been a regular system of gifts at the new year, given, for instance, to the king's officers, which were 'free' but not overlooked by the prudent man.

[Page 70.] *Kind*. The God of nature. (See note to page 10.)

[Page 70.] *Anima*. The soul.

[Page 73.] This refers to the legend of the time that Cain was conceived during the period of penitence and fasting imposed on Adam and Eve after their expulsion from Eden. It should be remembered, to understand Langland's thought, that it was common medieval practice and considered of great merit, for husbands and wives to refrain from intercourse during times of penitence and general fasting such as Lent, and especially if there was any particular reason for doing penance.

[Page 74.] The Dunmow flitch was apparently as well known in Langland's day as it is in ours, and perhaps regarded more seriously.

[Page 76.] *Margery pearls*. That is, simply pearls. 'Margery,' an anglicized version of the Greek for 'pearl,' is a bit of poetic tautology.

[Page 77.] *Bernard*. St Bernard of Clairvaux, 1091-1153, saint, philosopher, and theologian, famous in his own time, and throughout the Middle Ages.

[Page 78.] The custom of preaching in the open air at St Paul's Cross was carried on after the Reformation; Latimer, for instance, preached there. A preacher was sure there of a good public hearing and a certain fame, if not necessarily great influence.

[Page 78.] *Worm*. Snake or serpent; the word had a more general sense at the time than we give it.

[Page 80.] *The seven arts*. A reference to the system of education at the universities. 'Arts' has not our connotation, but is in distinction to the

higher studies of philosophy and theology. The seven arts consisted of the trivium: grammar, logic, and rhetoric; and the quadrivium: music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy.

[Page 82.] *Austin*. St Augustine of Hippo, 354-430, one of the four great 'fathers' of the early Western church, the others being St Ambrose, St Gregory the Great, and St Jerome. The works of all of them would be looked to as weighty, if not final, authorities, but St Augustine has always had the greatest popular influence.

[Page 83.] *Archa dei*. The Ark of the Covenant.

[Page 84.] *Constantine*. The fourth-century Roman emperor, Constantine the Great, whose conversion to Christianity by bringing to the Church the power and the wealth of the Western empire had such a profound and not in all ways happy effect on its development.

[Page 91.] A reference to the privacy of the confessional.

[Page 92.] *Trajan*. The great Roman emperor, A.D. 98-117. The reference is to a popular story, which may be found in that delightful work Caxton's translation of the Golden Legend, that Pope Gregory the Great held the memory of Trajan in such esteem and love that he plied God with prayers until Trajan's soul was delivered from hell. The whole passage shows Langland considering the question that troubled the mind of the Middle Ages very much, that of the salvation of the righteous heathen, for whom no explicit place had been made in the Church's economy of redemption. Langland's conclusion is that it is possible, but that, typically, it is through their own good works rather than the prayers even of the most holy of the faithful.

[Page 102.] *Roquemadour*. A much-loved shrine of our Lady in the Dordogne, with a long history. Charlemagne, in the eighth century, is supposed to have visited it, and Roland, his knight, left his sword there as an offering on the altar of the chapel of St Michael.

[Page 102.] *Felicia*. Probably a reference to the romance of Guy of Warwick, in which she is Sir Guy's wife and behaves with such disdain and contempt towards her husband that he leaves her, to her disgrace, after forty days. Rosamund, in the next line, was the mistress of King Henry II. Her story is well known; Tennyson, for instance, treats of it in his play 'Becket.'

[Page 103.] *Kind Wit*. Two of the most difficult words in *Piers Plowman* together (see notes to page 10 and page 66). Here the interpretation is something like 'instinctive understanding' of the sort that comes from experience and study.

[Page 105.] This seems an odd gloss on the stable at Bethlehem of St Luke's gospel. It is possibly derived from the word *domum* used in St Matthew's account of the coming of the wise men from the east. If this was thought of as a house and that house identified as the inn, i.e. the best house of a small town, and our Lord was born in the stable of that inn, then the idea is possible; but it can hardly be said to be more than a strained explanation.

[Page 106.] A reference to the 'neck verse' which saved many a rogue from hanging. So close was the connection between learning and the clergy that the power of reading a verse from the Bible could be used as evidence of being in holy orders—not necessarily as a priest, but minor orders, deacon or sub-deacon. The clergy were exempt from capital punishment, so it was a useful thing to be able to prove. This was most probably often merely a recognized convention, used to mitigate the extreme rigour of penalties for lesser crimes such as theft.

[Page 108.] *Avianus*. This term signifies simply a collection of fables. Avianus lived in the fourth century and wrote fables in Latin verse, but his name was used loosely to cover any writings of this nature.

[Page 112.] *Mahomet*. As a popularly considered infidel Mahomet's name was sometimes used as here to signify a devil; Langland elsewhere shows a somewhat more exact knowledge of Mohammedan beliefs.

[Page 112.] The apocalypse meant here is the Apocalypse of the Gluttons by Walter Mapes, a kind of parody of St John's Apocalypse. Saint Advisa was fed with fine white bread from heaven, the implication presumably being that such heavenly food is the only delicacy penitents should seek.

[Page 114.] *Lamp-line*. There seems to be no satisfactory explanation of this simple phrase. It *could* refer to a Latin inscription of some benevolent nature on the little lamps often kept burning before a shrine or statue (W. W. Skeat's suggestion), but there is nothing to say that it does.

[Page 114.] This riddle resembles the fanciful prophecies. It signifies generally baptism (the 'sign of the Saturday,' i.e. Holy Saturday before Easter Sunday on which day, traditionally, people were baptized into the Christian Church); repentance ('the wit of the Wednesday of the next week after,' i.e. the teaching of the epistle of the Wednesday after Easter); with Easter signified, as before, by 'The fullness of the moon.'

[Page 116.] The two heads are those of St Peter and St Paul on the seal (which in fact is the 'bull' itself) of a papal edict.

[Page 117.] *Stratford*. That is, the Stratford by London (Chaucer's Stratford-atte-Bowe) where lived many of the bakers who supplied London with bread.

[Page 117.] *Pope-holy*. 'Pious' as we tend to use that word to-day: superficially and perhaps hypocritically devout.

[Page 119.] Dame Emma of Shoreditch was presumably a well-known dabbler in the magic arts.

[Page 131.] *The pass of Alton*. At the time that part of Hampshire was heavily afforested, and this was a favourite spot for highway robbers and associated with them rather as Hampstead Heath was with highwaymen in the eighteenth century. The pass—passage or roadway—would be much used by travellers to and from Winchester, which was then an important city.

[Page 134.] This passage gives an account of the qualities or attributes of the soul (*Anima*) according to Catholic theology.

[Page 136.] *Johannes Chrysostomus*. John the 'Golden-mouthed.' The great saint and renowned preacher of the Eastern Church. He lived from about 344 to 407.

[Page 136.] *A set of beads*. Beads was common usage for what we now call the rosary; a 'set of beads' is a more extended way of saying it. 'Bidding one's beads' is saying the rosary.

[Page 136.] *Sir John and Sir Geoffrey*. The title 'sir' was used as one of respect, and often given, as here, to priests.

[Page 137.] *Long Will*. One of the small pieces of biographical information that can be gleaned from the text of the poem.

[Page 138.] That is, a box in which the charitable could put alms for the benefit of these anchorites, who were hermits in the sense of living alone in some sort of cell, but who had not retired to any 'wilderness' but on the contrary had their dwellings often in very public places.

[Page 139.] *Edmund and Edward*. St Edmund, King of East Anglia before the unification of the Anglo-Saxon states in England; martyred in 870. St Edward is the great king, Edward the Confessor, 1004–1066; he was patron of England before he was superseded by the chivalric but not entirely historical figure of St George.

[Page 140.] *Anthony, Giles.* St Anthony was one of the first hermits who lived in Egypt from, remarkably, 251 until 356. St Giles we would more accurately call a monk; he lived in Provence in the seventh and early eighth centuries, and was an extremely popular saint in the Middle Ages.

[Page 140.] *Paul, primus heremita.* Like St Anthony a hermit of Egypt, and celebrated as the first of them. Also like St Anthony the traditional dates of his life (230-342) suggests that the eremitical life was a peculiarly healthy one. The Paul mentioned almost immediately afterwards is of course the apostle.

[Page 141.] Langland refers here, as elsewhere, to the practice of leaving money for prayers to be said and Masses offered for the soul of the dead person. This, in view of the Catholic doctrine that the souls of the dead who have not gone straight to heaven can be helped in their state of expiation by the prayers of those still on earth, is reasonable. But in the Middle Ages the financial aspect of it, at least, had reached unreasonable proportions.

[Page 143.] *Quodlibet.* The method of thought, reasoning, and argument used by medieval philosophers and theologians, known as 'scholastic' and associated above all with St Thomas Aquinas, derived to a great extent from Aristotle. It was based on close reasoning, and question and answer. *Quodlibet* refers to a general question from anyone, which a master or doctor of divinity should be prepared to answer.

[Page 143.] *Offices and hours.* That is, the official daily prayer of the church, made up of psalms, prayers, lessons, and hymns; called 'hours' because appointed to be said or sung at set hours of the day.

[Page 143.] This account of Mahomet is Langland's version of a popular contemporary, and of course unfounded, story.

[Page 146.] This does not mean that these bishops actually had sees in these districts, although Langland is suggesting that if they were true Christians they should at least be preaching to the heathen there. These were a form of courtesy title given to certain prelates.

[Page 147.] *Templars.* A famous ecclesiastico-military order of a peculiarly medieval type which arose during the crusades. It became wealthy, although it cannot be said that its finances were mismanaged, and aroused the enmity especially of the powerful. After a great deal of intrigue and confusion it was suppressed by Pope Clement V in 1312.

[Page 147.] *Metropolitanus.* We would say 'archbishop,' here as it were archbishop of the whole world.

[Page 148.] *Saint Thomas.* St Thomas of Canterbury martyred in 1170 as an outcome of his struggle with King Henry II. His shrine in Canterbury Cathedral was one of the most popular in the Middle Ages. Already to Langland, as to many since, he is the symbol of the rights and well-being of the Church in face of the encroachment of the State.

[Page 167.] *Linen-less.* Langland has 'wolleward,' i.e. with wool next to the skin; he means without underlinen, so that his upper garment touched his skin.

[Page 167.] *Ramis palmarum.* Palm Sunday. *Ramis palmarum* and *gloria laus* are references to the entry of Christ into Jerusalem as described in St John's gospel, and also to the antiphons and hymn sung at the procession of palms before Mass on Palm Sunday.

[Page 172.] *Beau-père.* This name was sometimes given to a friar who was an authorized confessor. Here it probably signifies authority and benevolence.

[Page 176.] It may be wondered how such a thing was possible. The lines could be ironical; but more probably it is a reference to the custom of reprieving a criminal upon whom the penalty had been improperly carried out, especially if the king were near by and could be appealed to.

[Page 178.] A reference not simply to any performance of humble thanksgiving, but more specifically to the ceremony of creeping to the cross performed normally on Good Friday, in which worshippers process to a cross often genuflecting as they go, and kiss the foot of the cross.

[Page 180.] That of course is *not* the meaning of Christ—the meaning is ‘anointed.’ But Langland was not the only one, nor the first, to give it the signification of conqueror or king.

[Page 183.] *St Thomas of India*. There was a venerable tradition that the apostle Thomas preached the gospel in India.

[Page 185.] *Folville’s laws*. This probably means something like ‘lynch laws,’ i.e. a form of popular justice which is not necessarily evil, and indeed serves a useful purpose in a community where the king’s writ does not always run.

[Page 193.] Langland’s words are a rather beautiful paraphrase and elaboration of something our Lord did say, but not of course on the cross.

[illegible]

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

821.15
PR 2010 .A88 1957

Langland

The book concerning Piers
and the Plowman

PR 2010 .A88 1957

Langland

The book concerning Piers
and the Plowman

